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Networking Europe's participating organisations



Time passes quickly when we learn from each other!

In March 2012, the project Networking Europe set out on its mission to enhance cooperation and the exchange of expertise among a multitude of countries, organisations and projects within the European Union.

With its particular focus on EU member states in the Baltic Sea Region, the project, we believe, has fully rendered its contribution - both to the 'EU 2020' strategy and to that specifically aimed at the Baltic Sea area.

Under the banner of Networking Europe, seven different authorities, eleven municipalities and fourteen organisations rooted in civil society or in the field of social undertakings have devoted their enormous passion and fervour to the task of making the upcoming Social Fund budgetary period the success that it truly deserves to be. Accompanying us in our quest have been numerous organisations, all founded on the lofty principle of cooperation - in Stockholm, in other parts of Sweden, and across Europe.

We have arranged breakfast and lunch seminars to incite others to pursue new European endeavours of cooperation and transnational work. We have set up four trans-sectorial networks: to combat poverty and social exclusion, to promote Roma integration, to further employment and labour market mobility, and to learn more about entrepreneurship and social innovation.

The networks have seen organisations coming together and finding each other that represent civil society, authorities and municipalities in the Stockholm region and beyond. They have all been able to draw upon the knowledge, expertise and inspiration of their peers. They have identified areas where competences can be strengthened. They have organised study visits, and developed ideas for new, path-breaking moves.

In our efforts to spread what one might call a 'European value-added' component' among more actors in the Stockholm region, we have organised competence-enhancing 'Theme Days' - not least in inviting managers of projects and activities that we found particularly impressive - originating in such far-away places as Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Germany, Great Britain and Belgium. Highly topical development areas across the EU have formed the subjects of these 'Theme Days'.

In addition to all the above, we have managed to deepen cooperation on how to prevent students from leaving school prematurely, and in building 'low-threshold' activities meant to assist young people who neither study, nor work, nor engage in professional training.

We have encouraged dialogue about the vulnerability of migrants and the need to ensure their human rights. We have raised the issue of solidarity within the EU and in Swedish politics. We have examined the highly encouraging spread of social entrepreneurship under way, and we have gathered inspiration from all that which is being done at present at municipal and other levels in order to assist Roma integration in society at large. We have dealt with ways of forestalling violent behaviour, and we have taken up projects that aim to enhance the chances for people with various disabilities in finding employment.

In May 2013, the ESF Council issued a call for pilot studies. The aim was to pave the way for more cohesive and more strategic social fund projects ahead of the upcoming programming period. We are therefore happy that we have been given the possibility - in the course of this spring - to make a contribution toward the pilot studies undertaken by our participant organisations, via our

transnational contacts and exchanges. We are also extremely glad that we have been able to welcome more actors into our networks, and thereby contribute to enhanced cooperation within our region.

Right now we are in the borderland between two programming periods. With one foot in that which was - and the other already in that which will be - we look ahead with confidence to the upcoming seven years of European cooperation. Seven years of development potential and the chance of achieving something really good: good for our Roma populations; good for youth employment; good for utilising fully the vigour and potential of our most recent citizens; good for finding an outlet for more social innovation; and good for combating poverty and exclusion. In Stockholm. In Sweden as a whole. In Europe.

Thank you, all of you, for all your zeal and enthusiasm, for sharing this unique experience with us! Without you we could have achieved nothing! With you, everything is within reach!

With my warmest European regards,
Maria Fladvad
Project leader Networking Europe
Summer of 2014

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EUROPEISKA UNIONEN
Europeiska socialfonden

Background - From a Transnational Seed to a Lasting Roots Network

In mid-2011, Sensus Stockholm Gotland applied to be awarded the privilege of managing a project entitled 'Competence and Resource Platform for Transnational Development in the Stockholm Region'. The project arose from a perceived need on the part of both the ESF- Council for the Stockholm Region and Sensus to increase awareness of the potential for enhanced transnational cooperation within the framework of the Social Fund; to contribute to the implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy; and to encourage actors in the Stockholm Region to engage in closer cooperation with neighbouring countries during the upcoming programming period. A transnational seed had been sown.

And so it happened that, one sunny day in Spring 2012, the project 'Networking Europe' saw the light of day as it rose from the fertile soil of the Stockholm Region. Uniting public, private and volunteer organisations in the region around a common purpose, the project set out on a strategic mission to realise its main goal: enhancing transnational work, networking and the exchange of competences and skills within the EU in general, and the Baltic Sea region in particular.

The bar for the project was set high. In strengthening transnational cooperation, Networking Europe would ensure that the Stockholm Region and our presumed partners in other Baltic Sea region countries would no longer miss out on the 'European value-added' inherent in working together - a 'value-added' that will only become manifest through encounters across national borders permitting everyone concerned to better get to know each other, their problems and situations, and thereby indeed one's own.

Comparisons that yield awareness of strengths and weaknesses in systems and policies pursued at national level for employment and learning. Meetings that permit us to appreciate other ways of approaching problems and to share in the experiences of others. Encounters that let us relate to others what our own countries may do well in terms of models, methods and tools when it comes to tackling our joint European challenges - methods that may indeed gestate into new ideas and innovative solutions to issues we face back home.

In other words, the Stockholm Region would be readied for the new programming period 2014-2021 - by means of goal-oriented seminars and workshops relating to strategies, knowledge about inter-cultural and EU matters; and through the building of four networks – each of them organising conferences on themes relating to their own particular areas of concern.

In the pages to follow you will learn more about the countries, organisations and people we met during the period March 2012 to May 2014. We hope that you will find the report useful, and that it will inspire you to future European cooperation projects of your own design. We at Networking Europe wish you all the very best in this lofty endeavour!

Activities of Networking Europe

In the course of the project, Networking Europe has organised seminars, workshops, transnational breakfast and lunch get-togethers, theme days and matching meetings. It has hosted study visits offering tailor-made programmes; disseminated information about the European cooperation aspects of the project in places like Almedalen in the island of Gotland and in Brussels. Activities have been held at the Medborgarhuset, the Europahuset, in visits to our participant organisations and in other localities.

SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Competence and skills development in larger or smaller groups. The following areas have been covered:

- Network building
- English as a project language
- English EU terminology
- Influence-building in Brussels
- The Baltic Sea strategy and the 'EU 2020' programme
- Social media
- Environmental considerations in trans-national meetings
- Erasmus+
- Transnational funds and programmes
- Preparatory workshop for pilot study applications
- "Latest news", in cooperation with the Stockholm County Administrative Board, The Stockholm County Council and the ESF Council



EUROPEAN THEME DAYS

Dissemination and influence-building work in the Stockholm region undertaken for the purpose of giving more people an opportunity to partake of European added-value flowing from cooperation, and to experience the enjoyment arising from transnational work. Themes have arisen from discussions held in our various networks, but also from the priority areas established by the European Commission and the current political discourse and flow of ideas - whether in Sweden or in Europe at large.

'Kick-off!'

On 13 March 2012, Networking Europe in collaboration with its sister project 'Inclusive Europe' started its work with a 'kick-off' at the 'Stockholm Fotografiska' and with 200 guests, including speakers such as Ingemar Paulsson, ESF Regional Director for the Stockholm region, Katarina Tyczko of the National Supporting Institution in Poland, and former Brussels lobbyist Malin Tappert. The theme of the event was off course 'Transnationality'.

In Search of Solutions and Partnerships

In the course of a one-day conference, the theme of social entrepreneurship was approached from several angles. Academics, association representatives and indeed social entrepreneurs all proffered their views with regard to an often complicated set of concepts. Among the speakers were Fredrik Björk of the Malmö Högskola, Connor Friesen from the Social Innovation eXchange (SIX), Riinu Lepa from the Estonian Social Enterprise Network, Tiina-Katrina Kaber of the Estonian Responsible Business Forum (RBF) and social entrepreneur Fionn Dobbin, active in Latvia. Åsa Stenborg of Det Naturliga Steget acted as moderator during the session.

Meeting place Europe. The projects of the future!

Networking Europe's conference after the conclusion of one year of operations. Pierre Schellekens, Head of the EU Commission Office in Sweden, gave a presentation on opportunities arising in times of crisis: structural funds over the period 2014-2020 - duly assisted by an expert panel focussing on possible future developments. The Networks for their part offered presentations and discussions on themes such as 'Youth that does not exist'; 'Roma inclusion in the Baltic Sea region area, 'Joining forces to combat poverty and homelessness'; and 'The incubator as a stimulant for social innovation'. There were about 150 participants.

Theme Day on early school-leaving and youth left outside the labour market

The Agency for Youth and Civil Society and the Theme Group 'Young People and Working Life' gave an account of the report '10 reasons why people leave school prematurely'. Representatives of the Berlin Alfred Nobel school related their experience with the so-called Case Management method, and how the school works to forestall having youth leave school prematurely. The volunteer Caritas organisation shared their experience from working with NEETs and the FocusP project. The Hamburg 'Jobkontor' told of their project 'Jugend Activ' and the importance of being in a position to offer some form of employment basically from 'day one'.

'Man in the focus - a seminar about men who hit others'

An afternoon seminar took up methods of trying to modify the behaviour of men who resort to violence, and also discussed structural change that might change such behaviour. Among the participants were Magnus Loftsson from 'Men for equality' and representatives from the Finnish organisation AGGREDI, which uses dialogue as a means of getting men to leave violence behind.

Day of Rights at Almedalen

In the course of the 2013 Almedalen Week, Networking Europe in cooperation with Romané Bučá and Mötesplats 2020 organised a seminar on project opportunities in the Stockholm region. Building on its experience from offering process support for the European Social Fund over the period 2007-2013, Sensus gave the background as to why a study association of its kind had been awarded this mission, and how its work with the social fund project had served the cause of human rights.

What can we learn from our European neighbours?

Work on behalf of Roma inclusion in the Finnish municipality of Jyväskylä has proven a great success. Thanks to that municipality's employment of Roma in relations-building positions, and thanks to its prospering Roma association activities, the ethnic group in question has gained increased inclusion within Jyväskylä society. Networking Europe spread the news about this achievement at a two-day conference organised by the Stockholm County Administrative Board as part of the Strategy for Roma inclusion 2012-2013. The event was given due attention in the Swedish Radio news broadcast Radio Romano, "O Finlando del inspiracia sar te kerol o Shvedo inkludacia e romange".

EU migrants: the right to a decent life

On 20 February 2014 Networking Europe in cooperation with the Stockholms Stadsmission held a Theme Day on the subject of EU migrants and Roma issues at the Debaser Centre in Stockholm. Among the speakers at the event were Roma activist Bagir Kwiek; Claes Haglund from Crossroads Göteborg; Gisela Bergfors from the seeking-out unit for adults of the City of Stockholm; and Iselin Gasser from Doctors of the World. Thomas Hammarberg, Hans Caldaras and Bagir Kwiek formed a panel about the rights of EU migrants and Europe's responsibilities in this field. The three persons in question also participated in a concluding debate held with representatives of political life. Swedish Television broadcast a special documentary on the conference.

Work possibilities for people with functional disabilities

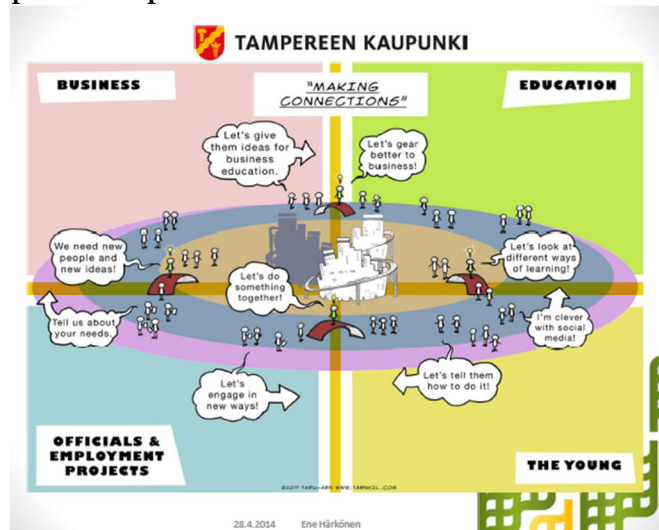
Functional disabilities should not form a ground for exclusion from the labour market. This was the message coming out of a one-day conference organised by Networking Europe. One of the speakers was Peter Stanley, manager of the Aldingbourne Trust in the United Kingdom, a foundation offering a wide range of activities for people facing learning difficulties. The theme day was arranged in cooperation with Carpe-2, a social fund project managed by the City of Stockholm.

Five Pilot Studies + an Idea for a New Project

A number of organisations participating in Networking Europe have engaged in pilot studies oriented toward proposed new projects during the upcoming programming period. In the spring of 2014, Networking Europe contributed towards ensuring that the pilot studies in question can form the basis for a first transnational exchange. The project has also helped in providing another project idea with the means to better observe its environment.

Coordination for the purpose of social entrepreneurship

The Coompanion Project Owner included a number of its partners in the pilot study during a transnational study visit to the city of Tampere, Finland. The aim was to learn more about the Finnish labour market reform LAFOS, and about the cooperation in place between authorities, municipalities, civil society and economic life aimed at helping more people join the labour market. Other participants in the study visit were representatives of the Swedish Försäkringskassa, the Södertälje Municipality, the Arbetsförmedlingen and Sensus.



A brief description of the pilot study by 'Coompanion Stockholms Län', Project Owner:

"'Coordination for Social Entrepreneurship' convenes all the coordinating associations concerned - as well their constituent member organisations - around a pilot study, in which we intend to lay the foundation for the actual implementation stage. The aim is to prepare a plan for developing social entrepreneurship in nine municipalities in southern Stockholm, in cooperation with their partners and the social enterprises concerned. The latter are represented by the 'Coompanion Stockholms Län' association, which is also the project owner. The pilot study will analyse needs and problem areas and the capabilities at local level to develop social entrepreneurship."

From sickness compensation to employment

Those engaged in The Swedish Social Insurance Agency pilot study 'From sickness compensation to employment' were also included in the delegation visiting Tampere. This was because the aim of the LAFOS reform is not restricted to just increasing cooperation between the different actors, but it also includes a more holistic approach, in trying to give people back, or enhance as the case may be, their working capacity.

A brief description of the pilot study by the Project Owner The Swedish Social Insurance Agency:

"The Swedish Social Insurance Agency will carry out a pilot study with the support of the Social Fund. Its purpose will be to examine the possibility of running a project during the upcoming programming period meant to help people who receive sickness compensation (previously called early retirement benefits) to re-enter the labour market. The cooperation in question will lead to closer relations between authorities, economic life and health and social care - the ultimate objective being to optimise the capabilities of the persons concerned to participate in working life. To the extent that this target group can move from social and economic exclusion to employment, this will contribute to economic growth in the Stockholm region, to a higher standard of living for the persons concerned, and to an improvement in public health."

Youth resources in Stockholm

The Swedish Social Insurance Agency representatives visited Berlin, Germany, at the end of April 2014. Among institutions visited were the Youth Advice Centre and Caritas, the aim being to enrol potential cooperation partners and learn more about how these work with their respective target groups.

A brief description of the pilot study by Project Owner The Swedish Social Insurance Agency:

"We intend to carry out a pilot study focussing on young adults with functional disabilities who are left stranded outside the labour market. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency, supported by the European Social Fund, will examine the possibilities of running - during the next programming period - a cooperation project in the Stockholm Municipality. In its capacity as the nation's capital, Stockholm faces particular challenges. One such challenge, conditioned by the size and administrative sub-division of the city, is that actors who work with a particular target group often lack the necessary overview. Our role will be to examine ways of working more efficiently with important players such as the City of Stockholm, the Arbetsförmedlingen and the social sector. Another challenge is the demand for labour, turning representatives of economic life and employers into additional important partners. The cooperation project in question is intended to reduce the extent of exclusion of the target group, by enhancing its possibility for self-sustenance, studies or employment. "

A change of generations

Networking Europe and the City of Stockholm carried out a joint study visit to The Netherlands at the end of April 2014 in order to study the 'generational change' work undertaken in the Port of Rotterdam

An outline of the pilot study by the City of Stockholm, Project Owner:

"'Job Market Stockholm' ('Jobbtorg Stockholm') wishes to examine the potential for a project aiming to close the gap that exists in the transmission of knowledge across generations. Joblessness among the younger generation is rife in many parts of Europe. In the County of Stockholm, 70 percent of job seekers are between 18 and 45 years of age, with a 45-year old having at least 20 years until retirement. Companies face difficulties in finding the right level of competences in spite of the number of jobless. In a few years, fewer people will be working and more people will need others to support them. Our vision is to identify new strategies for those who either enter or leave working life. This can create opportunities for young people lacking the experience and educational profile of their elder peers to build the kind of knowledge that can only be transferred in the work place. We want to enrol actors such as trade unions, social services, private and public work places, volunteer organisations and the like."



Roma inclusion in the Stockholm region

At the beginning of April 2014, Networking Europe in cooperation with the Stockholm County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelsen) organised a study visit to Gent, Belgium, to learn more about the Roma network in that city. The aim was twofold: to look at the operational structures, perspectives and methods used by the city, and to prepare for an exchange of experiences between Stockholm and Gent in time for the next programming period. Accompanying us were representatives from the Stiftelsen Stockholms Folkhögskola, the Södertälje Municipality, the City of Stockholm and Sensus.

An outline of the pilot study by the Project Owner Stockholm County Administrative Board:

"The Stockholm Region needs to establish close cooperation among all partners concerned in order to better favour Roma inclusion. The aim of the pilot study is to reach better insight into the conditions of Roma in the Stockholm Region, and to promote their integration in line with the ambition recently laid down by the Swedish government - which is that a Roma youth who turns 20 in the year 2032 should have the same life opportunities as his or her non-Roma counterpart in Swedish society. The pilot study is to examine in depth the various obstacles facing the Roma target group as they try to establish themselves in the labour market, and the kinds of methods that may be used over the longer term in the Stockholm Region. It will also look into the potential for a cohesive, strategic attempt to further Roma inclusion in the Stockholm region. A preliminary study will be undertaken, with the objective to over time establish a trans-county strategic cooperation for developing methods toward Roma inclusion."

The Stockholm City Mission -Stockholms Stadsmission

The Stockholms Stadsmission applied for authorisation to undertake a pilot study, which was, however, not granted. This meant that the idea undergirding the project could not result in a project.

The Project Owner in question outlined the project in the following terms:

"The pilot study aims at examining the possibilities for Romanian Roma who at present live in conditions of social and economic exclusion in Sweden to return to Romania with a newly gained ability to ensure lasting income via social entrepreneurship. The pilot study has as its aim to pave the way for a forthcoming project seeking to establish social enterprises capable of exporting their output to Sweden. It will seek to map needs, potentialities and obstacles relating to social enterprises in Romania aiming to export to Sweden. It will try to find appropriate partners in Romania and Sweden, and to identify types of entrepreneurial orientations and products suited over time. The aim of the pilot study is to lay the foundation for a transnational project capable of promoting the inclusion of Roma in society and in the labour market."



In view of the nature of the proposed project, representatives of the Stockholm Stadsmission and Networking Europe paid a study visit to Romania to gain new insights into the potential for developing transnational social enterprise. The visit showed such potential that it gained the attention of Sveriges Radio, the Swedish national publicly funded broadcaster.

Marian Vasile is 22 years old and works at the special enterprise Ateliere Fara Frontiere in Bukarest.

Ateliere Fara Frontiere is a good example of how to provide work opportunities and support to EU-migrants by creating social businesses and enterprises.

Labour Market Employment and Mobility

At present, 23 million people in the EU are unemployed, representing 10 percent of the labour force. In addition, as from 2012 the working-age population in the EU will go down in number according to the European Commission, signifying that more people will have to work for our social welfare systems in order for them to function. Today it is above all the young and the elderly that face difficulties in entering the labour market.

The network's working group was comprised of the following organisations:

Arbetsförmedlingen, Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, The City of Stockholm, Coompanion Stockholms län, Företagsakademin, Tyresö Municipality and Järfälla Municipality.

Kaarina Wettergren from the *Arbetsförmedlingen* is responsible for convening the Working Group from March 2012 to January 2014. Daniel Cronholm from Sensus Stockholm Gotland replaced her during the period February 2014 to June 2014.

HELSINKI, FINLAND, II JUNE 2012

The Working Group visited two activities focussing on young people who are at a far remove from the labour market.

VAMOS

VAMOS is managed by the *Helsinki Deaconess Institute* It offers a comprehensive set of services for young people between the ages of 16 and 29. In actively seeking contact with those concerned, VAMOS offers activities at individual and group level, contacts with presumptive employers and a follow-up after three years. The centre also offers health care and links with other actors in society.

VAMOS emphasises that it is 'in for the long haul' in its work with young people, and that its success is built on respect for and confidence in others, and on their preparedness for volunteer services. The point of departure are the realities of the young themselves, their capabilities and their wishes. The involvement and patience of its staff is also a major asset.

SVEPS

SVEPS is a social undertaking and one out of 29 youth workshops in the Helsinki area. Youth workshops are frequent across Finland and sort under national workshop associations. SVEPS also receives funding from the government as well as from various (especially Finnish-Swedish) foundations.

SVEPS offers young people a whole series of services, ranging from identifying potential clients to follow-up support measures undertaken three years following the end of the assistance period. Stages include 'low-threshold' support (such as practising social skills), full-day activities (work training and study planning), contacts with enterprises and job coaching. Participation is on a voluntary basis and takes as its point of departure the particular interests and needs of the youth concerned.

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK AND MALMÖ, SWEDEN 27-28 NOVEMBER 2012

Fenix

The Working Group, while in Malmö, paid a visit to the Fenix project, in existence since 1994. This project is directed at young people who have strayed outside the reach of regular measures

undertaken in the social and labour market fields. Most participants are in the 18-24 age group, have only basic schooling and little experience with remunerated work. Many of them face serious problems of a psycho-social nature. The recruitment area comprises the entire Malmö region. Participation presupposes that the person in question is motivated, has housing and is not drug-dependent. Work practice forms part of the rehabilitation process. Fenix can receive up to 40 clients, and recruitment is continuous.

A plan of action is established on an individual basis and a preparation for practical work is offered in the form of service in the Fenix cafeteria. There ensues a traineeship period, whether one offered by the Malmö municipality (such as park maintenance) or by some other employer.

Social secretariat staff and psychologists work in tandem. Work practice, psychotherapy and social support form the cornerstones of the activities. The client and the competent social secretary jointly draw up an action plan containing the challenges as defined by the client, his or her capabilities, objectives and time frame for the achievement of these objectives. A person can remain signed up for a Fenix project for up to three years, even though the average time is only two years. Fenix sorts under, and is financed by, the Arbetscentrum organisation and the Serviceförvaltningen.

Fenix also cooperates with the so-called Second Chance School, which helps young people find a footing in the labour market. Participants are helped in completing interrupted primary or secondary schooling, and in carrying out an entire professional training programme, or part thereof, within the premises of a particular workplace.

Around 60 percent of participants leaving the Fenix project find employment and are able to provide for themselves. Many of those remaining subsequently form the object of other municipal support measures.

Employment and Integration Measures Undertaken by the City of Copenhagen

The Working Group in the course of its visit to Copenhagen met with representatives of that city's administration responsible for employment and social integration. One project, entitled *'Mobility between the Eastern Denmark and the Scania Regions'*, manages a sub-project called *'Jobs and Education in the Öresund Region'*. Its aim is to enhance the supply and exchange of employment, education and traineeships in Sweden and Denmark.

This cooperation between the two countries presents many advantages, and benefits from what various differences are to be found between them. Job seekers face a greater range of offers, spanning as they do both countries. By way of example, there is a shortage of primary school teachers in Sweden, while Copenhagen has too many. There are similar discrepancies when it comes to IT-specialists and personal assistants. In 2008, a record number of some 20,000 people commuted daily between Sweden and Denmark - this being a figure that has continued at elevated level ever since.

Jobs Centres

The Copenhagen administration responsible for employment and social integration informed the Working Group as to the Danish system of job centres, created when the traditional employment agencies were abolished in 2006. There is in principle one Jobs Centre in each municipality, the big difference being that a 'jobs centre' also houses a social administration and an 'A-kassa' (unemployment insurance) even though these latter activities are pursued independently. The idea is to offer *'A Way In'*, and also to gain a better overview of the entire situation instead of dispersing activities among numerous different institutions.

BERLIN, GERMANY 14-16 JANUARY 2013

The purpose of the visit was to study activities aimed at helping youth during the transition from school to professional life. The target group were so-called NEETs (i.e. those 'Neither in Employment, nor Education, nor Training').

The German school system differs from that in Sweden, to which comes that Germany's 16 regions each has its own independent school policy - so that for instance ages for starting school and the duration of schooling may differ across the country. Germany's youth unemployment is comparatively low by EU standards.

The Federal Ministry for the Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

The Working Group was informed about the functioning of the German school system and the normal transition from school to professional life, including the Ministry's own role in these areas. An important point of departure in the Ministry's own running of its various nation-wide projects may be termed its 'grassroots perspective' - meaning the viewing of the situation from the angle of the participant, and the avoidance of any authoritarianism in the management of projects. Another ambition is to fortify existing structures at local level as among different authorities and actors.

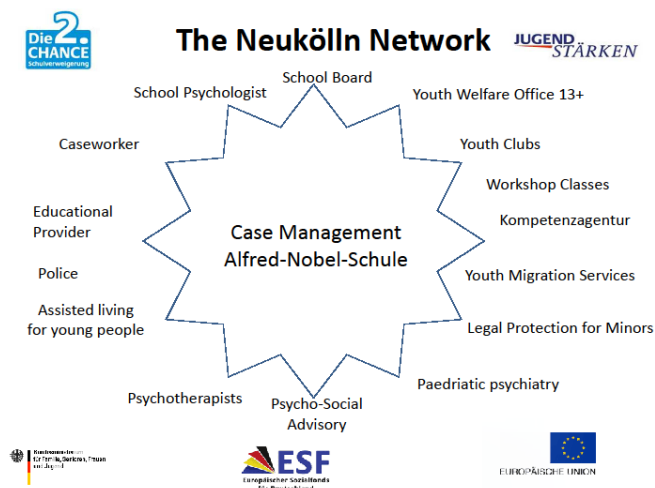
Four national projects:

- *The Youth Strength Initiative. (Initiative Jugendstärke)*
- *Second Chance (Die 2. Chance)*
- *Competence Agencies*
- *Active in the Region. (Aktiv in Der Region)*

Case Management

One method introduced within the Second Chance project is called 'case management' and is now spreading to other similar initiatives.

A 'case manager' is responsible for a maximum of 15 students and works locally, such as within a particular school. He or she may be a sociologist, a field worker or someone with a similar background. Teachers or other types of school officials inform the case manager about students likely to decide on leaving school prematurely. Two risk categories are given particular attention: active truancy and passive truancy, by which latter term is meant a situation where the student concerned is present but ostensibly passive. The case manager tries to establish a rapport of trust and respect with the student and endeavours to find a way to enable him or her to again participate actively in the school work. A 'holistic' perspective is sought, and the case manager first tries to deal with matters of primary importance, such as a safe and secure home environment, sufficient nourishment, peace and calm during homework hours, treatment of any psychological ill-health, or a change of school. The case manager also calls or even goes to pick up a youth who is unduly absent. Youth benefiting from a case manager have a 60 percent reintegration rate, as measured by the young person's in



question finishing his or her schooling. An impressive figure indeed in comparison with those not enjoying this kind of support.

The Alfred Nobel School

A Primary School in the Berlin District of Neukölln

The district of Neukölln has one of the highest proportion of immigrants in the city of Berlin. Unemployment is rife when compared to other parts of Berlin, and a major share of the inhabitants lack higher education. With parents lacking even basic schooling, the challenge for the young of staying in school, getting good grades and moving on in life becomes a major one for many students in the area.

The Alfred Nobel School works actively against truancy, both to prevent students leaving prematurely, and to make those who have already taken this step return. The project forms part of the 'Second Chance' project and consists in cooperation among the school's teachers, social workers and a local coordinator who manages a network involving local authorities, social and health care workers and other social instances. All adapt their work according to the needs of each student. (See picture on this page.)

The case management method is key to this project's success, given its focus on finding a solution to the problem at hand in direct cooperation with the individual student.

The Magdalena House, managed by the Caritas organisation

The Second Chance ('Die Zweite Chance') in the Lichtenberg part of Berlin.



The Caritas organisation is an NGO belonging to the German Catholic Church. Since many years, Caritas manages the Magdalena House located in one of the most exposed parts of Berlin. The house - rented but under threat of demolition - offers extra support for children, youth and parents facing difficulties in reintegrating society and in shaping a new future for themselves. The premises offer 'open pre-school' teaching; activities for young people at risk who are not engaged in either studies, work or professional training; family consulting; and support to parents with children engaged in the project. The work receives funding from the project 'Schulverweigerung' (School Refusal';Die 2.e Chance)

Young people having left regular schooling prematurely are being welcomed to the Magdalena House. Here they are received by trained social workers and therapeutic staff whose first priority is to establish a relationship of trust and respect with them.

Given the target group's often vivid experience of not fitting into the normal school system and of carrying with them some kind of trauma (such as mobbing, exclusion or failure), the Magdalena House staff are keen to avoid at the outset activities that are reminiscent of school work or group activity. Only after about a year and a half will the goal develop into one of channelling the students into regular schooling, professional training or employment.

The Neukölln Youth Advice Centre

The visitor's first sight upon entering the Neukölln Youth Advice Centre is one of a big hall, in whose midst are placed two workplace 'islands', each hidden under a huge yellow parasol - the whole reminiscent of a friendly and welcoming indoor square. To our left is an information desk in the shape of a coffee bar. The walls of the hall are in resplendent colours, and here and there stand lush green plants.

We have arrived at the centre which in German media has been dubbed 'The house with the short passages'. And indeed, all activities seem to have their place on the 'square', which also serves as the first stop for most visitors. Everybody here has come of his or her own accord, and they can all receive immediate assistance in filling out employment applications and the like, or discuss their professional or life situation with any of the centre's staff. If more support should be needed, all the visitor has to do is to take a few additional steps to reach the particular project appealing to him or her, and participate for a while in the discussion.

The Neukölln Youth Advice Centre aims at supporting children and young people in the transition from school to professional life, and to offer network services in order to facilitate the integration of young people into professional life and in cooperating with local actors. The centre employs work and study advisers, social workers, and even experts on how to reduce one's personal debt. The activities are financed by volunteer organisations, local authorities and the municipality of Neukölln, the Land of Berlin and the European Social Fund.

The centre's target groups are young people in the 13-27 age group, including students and parents. Seven thousand visitors are registered each year, and the number rises constantly. A large majority are of immigrant background. Assistance is given for example in filling out requests for employment or in penning a CV. Courses are also offered to prepare young people for professional life, and to familiarise youngsters with different potential career paths.



WARSAW, POLAND, 12 DECEMBER 2012

A school in 'Mokra wise'. The Social Integration Youth Club Project

The overriding goal of this project is to find and rehabilitate youth between 15 and 19 years of age who for various reasons - such as learning difficulties, behavioural problems, and social problems in the home or single-motherhood - risk lasting social exclusion. The project can receive a maximum of 45 youngsters originating with five schools in the area. 24 girls and 21 boys participated in the project at the time of the visit.

The project is led by the school's headmaster and employs teachers, a psychologist, an educational expert, a social therapist, and an advisor. The activities take as their starting point the needs of each student and are carried at both individual and group level.

One central ambition is to strengthen youth self-confidence. Some are even in need of basic social skills, such as using cutlery when eating or handling social interaction. The youth in question are taken twice a week by bus from their schools to the project premises in order to participate in workshops, professional guidance sessions and sport, music and other activities. Meals are provided

for all. Excursions to work places are also undertaken. Participation (including in the excursions) is cost-free and takes place on a voluntary basis.

The aim of the project is to enable 10 percent of the young men and women to find work as a result of their having participated in it. The school's principal expressed a strong interest in further developing methods employed in cooperation with other projects and activities in various EU member states and would be happy to receive additional information in this regard.

The project runs from September 2011 to February 2013 and is entirely financed through the ESF/Human Capital Investment programme.

HAMBURG, GERMANY, 21-23 JANUARY 2013

The visit had as its objective to learn more about how the City and Land of Hamburg goes about guiding its young in the transition from school to apprenticeship, and how it manages to activate those among its young who are the furthest away from the labour market. It is to be hoped that these experiences can pave the way for transnational cooperation during the forthcoming EU budgetary period.

The Agency responsible for employment, social affairs, family and integration.

Here the Working Group gained insights into the workings of the European Social Fund in Germany, and in Hamburg more particularly, as they jointly seek out people far removed from the school system and the labour market - all under the motto 'Nobody must be left outside!'

AV DUAL

The Hamburg project AV Dual is a full-time project combining school education with apprenticeships. The planning departs from the capabilities of each student and builds on close cooperation between different educational systems, local entrepreneurs, employment agencies and other institutions. AV Dual devotes its resources with foresight, realising for instance that not all students may be in need of an academic degree for future success. Great attention is given to the professional perfection of its staff.

The Jugendberufsagentur (Youth Employment Agency): a 'One-Stop Shop'

This new employment initiative aims to systematically facilitate the transition from school to apprenticeship. Young people (from the 8th year of schooling upwards) receive advice from a pluri-competent team, all within the same building. Everybody is quickly offered apprenticeships, an educational programme or other forms of professional training. A designated contact person keeps everybody informed, including the student concerned, sometimes through home visits. Representatives from the school, the employment agency, the municipality and an information centre are all to be found on the premises. The agreement of all the parties concerned is ensured throughout.

The 'Soziale Jungen' project, Hamburg

The ESF project 'Soziale Jungen' aims at the target group of young men between the ages of 13 and 16 (sometimes extended from 12 to 17). The objective is to awaken their interest in occupations within the social sector, in the process also helping to remedy the under-representation of men in these professions. The study plan is amended to encompass the possibility of doing voluntary work with children and the elderly, combined with schooling proper.

The 'Jugend Aktiv' project

The 'Jugend Aktiv' project is housed in a villa and offers activities for various age groups: pre-schooling, ordinary schooling and parental guidance. 'Jugend Aktiv' runs around ten different

coaching and job projects, with the aim of reaching social and labour market integration. The ESF



and local authorities co-finance the project on a 50/50 basis. It targets jobless young people in the 18-to-25 age category struggling with social problems on account of having lost their previous financial support (the so-called NEETs). Stress is laid on developing the social skills of the participants. Short-term employment can be arranged quickly with employers participating in the project. The premises can also house education

in smaller groups, and students have the possibility of obtaining final grades in their basic schooling.

GOAL

GOAL is a coaching project financed by the ESF together with the Hamburg Department for Economy and Employment. Targeted are young people who find themselves excluded from the labour market. They face a multitude of problems such as interrupted schooling, social complications or a lack of work experience. The project aims to offer apprenticeships and professional training in general. Strategic concepts are often borrowed from the world of football, such as goal-scoring situations, good player-coach relations, or improving technical playing skills (e.g. shaping a job application).

Opportunities exist to practise test-taking in professional skills, motor skills, spatial skills, understanding various work instructions, and linguistic skills in German and English. These exercises can pay off in an employment situation. Basic courses in mathematics are also on offer.

CHICHESTER, WEST SUSSEX, ENGLAND 25–27 JUNE 2013

The Aldingbourne Trust is a trust with its seat in Chichester, West Sussex, England. Its objective is to work in close cooperation with local entrepreneurs, societal actors and people with learning and other disabilities toward enhancing the development and life quality of all.

Variety, equality and the inclusion of all the people concerned are key concepts in the Foundation's philosophy. There is a will to help the participants develop their well-being and their ability to lead a life in independence. At the same time it lays stress on keeping the enterprise in line with market principles.



The activities branch out in different directions. Anything from support for housing, creative work, employment guidance and professional training, whether in the different social undertakings or in the ordinary labour market. A variety of services are offered to enterprises and the general public. Apart from the income derived from sales *per se*, from rent from property or from entry fees, there are contributions from event sponsors and donations from

the public. All those who are hired for management positions are highly competent and experienced within their field of activity and undergo continuous training. Some of the staff are volunteers.

The Centre started on a small scale 32 years ago, following which it has grown at a steady pace so as to now form a major enterprise. Activities that did not work have been abandoned, while new ones have been added. Plans for new, impressive main premises are there, but some further fund-raising remains to be done until the entire estimated investment of 4 million pounds can be entered into.

A café. Artistic activities

Our tour started in the café, a clearly profitable activity. Another major profit centre are the regularly held conferences on various subjects.

The greenhouse

The greenhouse is less profitable than the café but brings other therapeutic and educational results that are of importance. Here school children can learn more about the natural circle of life.

The animal farm

The animal farm is very popular with families with children. Here, you can make the acquaintance of guinea-pigs, hens, cocks, goats and pigs. There is even bee-keeping. In an example of good neighbourly partnership, a nearby company provides sponsored wooden homes for the guinea-pigs.

Wood recycling

The Aldingbourne Country Centre is active in wood recycling and renovation, in that it collects wood waste, sorts it and sells it. The activity has permitted the creation of numerous opportunities for work and professional training adapted to the level of skill of the participants. Some of the wood is recycled in the Centre's workshop, for the fabrication of e.g. benches and nesting boxes. The general public can also hand in furniture for repair or restoration. The wood recycling programme impressed us all, and several of us were determined to try to apply the idea at home.

Woodland Walks

The Woodland Walks area can be likened to a lush oasis, offering walks of different length and difficulty (such as a steeplechase course), together with notice-boards along the way giving information about the various trees, plants, birds and insect life encountered. The walks offer a moment of relaxation, why not including a picnic.

A music studio

The Aldingbourne Country Centre also has a music studio housed in one of the premises. Here, participants can create their own music, aided by a professional instructor.



A laundry for horse rugs

The most recent social enterprise at Aldingbourne is a laundry for horse rugs. The laundry also accepts other textiles, whether for laundry, waterproofing, repair, or resale.

Support in favour of social entrepreneurship

The Aldingbourne Country Centre supports social entrepreneurship in its region.

Office and training premises

In the coastal town of Bognor, about half an hour's journey from the Country Centre, the foundation owns office and educational facilities. Here there is also a service offering advice and support to young people with problems. The service also engages in visiting work. The Bognor facility also houses an employment agency of a rather special kind: the personnel is first trained for the job in question, following which it trains the participant and accompanies him or her in the actual employment for as long as needed.

We were also given an opportunity to visit a workshop where the participants painted colourful pictures, for subsequent exhibition in Bognor. Picture postcards with the paintings were on sale.

The premises also housed a big open kitchen, where visitors could learn how to cook or be given courses in nutrition.

PARIS, FRANCE, 13-15 NOVEMBER 2013

The aim of the study visit to France was to learn more about methods to enhance the possibility for people with functional disabilities to enter the labour market.

Legislation

In 2005 France introduced legislation stipulating that people with functional disabilities must constitute at least six percent of the work force in undertakings of 20 or more. If this percentage is not met, employers must pay into a fund specially designed to assist the category concerned.

Pôle emploi (Employment agency)

The 'Pôle emploi' has a unit working exclusively with people within the different branches of the agency suffering from functional disabilities. The unit tries above all to inform and educate in matters of functional disabilities, and to point to existing opportunities for support and training.

The unit was set up in recognition of the fact that too few companies in France reach the goal of six percent, causing the 'Pôle emploi' itself to try to set a good example. In the process, the agency has surpassed the share in question, to reach a 6.8 percent level.

'Handipass'

Handipass forms part of the 'Pôle emploi' and works exclusively with people suffering functional disabilities, to enable them to enter the labour market. It is active only in the Paris region, with no corresponding activity in other parts of France.

The organisation has 18 employees, divided into two teams. The target group is 7.300 people with functional disabilities in the Paris region, representing 4.8 percent of the people in search of employment. (For France as a whole, the percentage is 7.8 percent.)

The methods used by 'Handipass' are specially adapted to each individual. A team is formed for each person, with the latter in the role of 'project leader'. Given the specificity of each case, it is difficult to identify a typical way of proceeding, but it is reminiscent of work done in Sweden, where it may be based on a CV, correspondence and interviews.

AFASER in the Val de Marne and in Paris

AFASER is an organisation that offers people with functional disabilities work in so-called 'sheltered employment', often offering a guaranteed occupation until retirement.

The organisation manages a hotel activity, catering, the fabrication of baskets and lamp-shades (made by blind people), as well as product packaging, for example on behalf of 'TV Shop'. There is also fabrication of juggling paraphernalia.

The Swedish delegation also visited a hotel run by staff with functional disabilities. It is highly frequented and maintained competitive prices combined with high quality in the services offered. Wages were composed of an ordinary salary part and another portion financed with public money.

Success in Helping Young People Find Work

In Hamburg, work to assist young people in finding employment is characterised by a holistic approach and professionalism. In consequence, the *'Employment and Labour Market Mobility' Working Group* - forming part of Networking Europe - during its visit to the city found much that could be put to very good use also in Sweden.

German youth unemployment is low in comparison with that in many other European countries. As the *'Employment and Labour Market Mobility' Working Group* - forming part of *Networking Europe* - visited Hamburg it was able to witness at first-hand how the city works to facilitate for young people to enter the labour market.

"The Hamburg motto on this is - as liberally translated: 'Don't leave anybody out in the cold!'. The projects we visited followed two main orientations: to facilitate the passage from school to apprenticeship, and to activate the so-called NEETs (i.e., 'Neither in Employment nor Education nor Training')," says Kaarina Wettergren, responsible for convening this particular Working Group forming part of the overall Network.

Kaarina Wettergren says that the Group was given an overview of Hamburg's work in this area by the city's *Department Responsible for Employment and Social, Family and Integration Affairs*, which also manages several projects that are partly sponsored by the ESF. The German apprenticeship system (Lehrlingssystem) forms a central part of the work to help young people find their way into the labour market.

"The projects were built squarely around the effort to find apprenticeships. For many young people this is their first step into the labour market," says Kaarina Wettergren.

She also found a holistic view in the German approach, in that measures in various areas were often coordinated with great efficiency. This also held, for example, for the work of the *'Jugendberufsagentur - One-Stop Shop'*. Here all activities are housed together: professional guidance, information on school matters, social services for young people, unemployment insurance, an employment agency, school officials and so on.

"Setting up things in this way has many advantages compared with dispersing them in scattered form. It's a lot more efficient. You can avoid duplication of effort between different authorities."

Kaarina Wettergren draws the comparison with Sweden, where different actors often draw up separate plans of action for one and the same person.

"That causes confusion. At the *Jugendberufsagentur* there is only one plan of action and everybody knows who does what. It's much easier to get an overview of the labour market and to cooperate when you're all together," says Kaarina Wettergren.

It is possible to combine schooling with apprenticeship within the AV DUAL framework. There is an ongoing and agreement-based cooperation between basic schooling and professional education.

The participating youth attend school two days a week and their apprenticeship the remaining three - or vice versa as the case may be.

"The project leader truly exuded enthusiasm. He was a real driving force, challenging obsolete systems and regulations. Many parents, for instance, feel that because they never had an academic education, their children must necessarily have one. It is better to instead consider each child's needs individually."

The primary school and the professional school sign an agreement on how they are to cooperate and function. A specially designated contact person for each youth assists in his or her dealings with the several institutions involved.

The 'Social Boys' project aims to incite young men to find work in the social care sector. Youth in their 7th to 9th year of schooling get the opportunity to engage in voluntary work in, for instance, day-care centres or homes for the elderly.

"It's called volunteering, but it's part of the school plan. It's really professional training forming part of the ordinary education."

Kaarina Wettergren says the project is not without controversy.

"There has been some resistance from parents who don't want their boys to engage in this kind of activity. Germany is rather traditionalist and many stereotypes remain."

Jugend Aktiv is a label covering a number of different projects in Hamburg. One looked at in particular by the Working Party was aimed at social and labour market integration.

The target group was the previously mentioned so-called NEETs. Great emphasis is placed on social skills. This is important for building relations with others and winning their confidence. Cooperation with other actors is given priority.

"What I really liked was that the youth in question were offered employment or professional training basically from the first day. There is a network of local employers with whom the centre are in close contact."

GOAL is an orientation project (partially financed by the ESF) which aims to find a way from apprenticeship to the labour market.

"The project targets young people who do not have normal access to the labour market and who face a variety of problems. They have been assisted in different ways but lack work experience," says Kaarina Wettergren.

For motivational purposes much of the vocabulary is drawn from the world of football, hence the project name of 'GOAL'.

"The motto is 'Fight for your goal!'. It's a matter of showing your worth, your knowledge and ambition, of analysing your game and learning to respect its rules. You trust in your coach and in yourself. Job interviews are called 'qualifiers'. It's also important to accept a situation when you don't get what you want," says Kaarina Wettergren.

So what can we in Sweden learn from Germany? Quite a lot, in fact, says Kaarina Wettergren, while conceding that the German focus on apprenticeships would be a higher-level political matter were it ever to be emulated to the same extent in Sweden.

"I was looking at the German experience from a project perspective to see what we might be able to pick up for our future activities in the Working Group, especially the prospect of quickly finding employment or schooling opportunities. What these projects have in common is a focus on the individual, on building relationships and networks."

She also points to the strong personal involvement on the part of all those active on these issues.

"All the staff we met were so enthusiastic. And competent," concludes Kaarina Wettergren.

English Wood Recycling: Now Recycled in Sweden

The Aldingbourne Trust Country Centre in Chichester, England, employs people with learning difficulties and other functional disabilities, and is engaged in a host of different areas of activity. One is the recycling of wood products - an activity which Björn Thulin and Thomas Arvidsson from the city of Lidingö found particularly interesting as they visited the centre.

The visit to the Aldingbourne Trust was arranged by Networking Europe. The Centre runs a host of different activities - including a greenhouse, a café, an animal farm, a music studio, a laundry and, indeed, a wood recycling installation.

"The Aldingbourne Trust works with construction companies nearby. They call the Centre when they are stuck with some surplus material, which the Centre then collects and recycles," says Thomas Arvidsson.

The recycled building material is used, for instance, in making loading pallets. But those who came to visit the Centre also started to ask for other things, such as renovated furniture.

"So then they started doing that, too. Out of wood recycling was born the idea of taking in broken furniture and simply restoring it," says Björn Thulin.

Thomas Arvidsson leads a group of young men with light functional disabilities in Lidingö. They collect garbage and do carpentry work on behalf of the municipality. They also restore furniture but not on the scale of the Aldingbourne Trust.

"At Aldingbourne Trust they restore antique and other quality furniture. They had a whole facility dedicated entirely to furniture renovation."

Thomas Arvidsson, originally a cabinet-maker, says that the Lidingö Centre only deals in outdoor furniture.

"We replace planks, battens and the like. This being said, furniture restoration is something I would like to develop in order to deal also with indoor furniture."

Björn Thulin is the Stadsmission process manager responsible for work integration matters. Like Thomas Arvidsson and Per Öhman from the Södertälje municipality, he feels that wood recycling is worth considering. On his return from England they all got together to see how this idea might be developed in a Swedish context.

Björn Thulin has sent in a project application to the ESF.

"It's a youth project that we in the Stadsmissionen believe in, including as it does the wood recycling aspect. So I asked Thomas and Per if they'd be interested in a partnership, which they were," says Björn Thulin.

Björn Thulin feels one of the biggest gains from the England trip was to establish new contacts.

"There were eleven of us participating, and I didn't know any of them beforehand. But now I do. I suppose that's one of the aims of the whole project, isn't it?" says Björn Thulin.

One thing that Björn Thulin noticed during the England study visit was the entrepreneurial spirit pervading the Aldingbourne Trust - one example being how the idea behind its laundry activity came about.

"They thought: 'What do people do in this region? They ride horses. How many horses are there? About 10,000, they figured. All horses have horse blankets. How many per horse? Five. So if there are 50,000 dirty horse blankets around, we'll wash them clean.' So they started up a laundry."

Once the laundry was in place, they started cleaning heavy covers as well, those not fitting into ordinary washing machines.

"This is great. They identify needs and meet them. That's for real. What I hate is when you create artificial activities just to keep people busy."

Several of those working with Aldingbourne Trust are engaged in marketing, or making posters or ads on Facebook or Twitter. And events. Since Thomas Arvidsson works for a municipality, this part of the activity is in part confined. It is just not possible to act as freely here as is in the Aldingbourne Trust.

"If we had an independent activity we could do more. For instance, we can't have a website of our own but can only add bits and pieces to that of the municipality," says Thomas Arvidsson.



Still, even though Thomas Arvidsson would welcome that kind of freedom of action, he also realises that municipal activities, too, have some advantages.

"So I'm not complaining. The municipality offers security. If our project were to fail, I still have the municipality to fall back on."

Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion



The European Union is one of the wealthiest regions in the world, and yet 17 percent of EU citizens cannot afford even the most basic amenities of life.

2010 was chosen as the 'European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion'. It also represented the start of much more ambitious measures to be undertaken in various areas of policy. The new strategy, 'Europe 2020', identifies the combat against poverty as a domain to be given the highest priority.

The network's working group was comprised of the following organisations:

European Anti-Poverty Network, Stockholms Stadsmission, Basta arbetskooperativ, The City of Stockholm, Järfälla Municipality and the Sensus studieförbund.

Sonja Wallbom, former president of the RFHL and co-founder of EAPN was responsible for convening the working group between March 2012 and December 2013. Inger Forsgren, new president of the RFHL, replaced Sonja during the period January 2014 to June 2014.

RIGA, LATVIA, AND TALLINN, ESTONIA. 10-11 DECEMBER 2012.

The purpose of the visit was to gain new experience in the field of child and family poverty, in particular as regards work to enhance the ability of parents to improve the living conditions of their family, as well as activities directed at children living in conditions of poverty and social exclusion. Contacts were sought with representatives from both the public sector and NGOs. .

Riga City Council Welfare Department

Our visit to the Riga City Council Welfare Department included meetings with representatives of the city itself as well as a number of charities. Estonia was at this moment undergoing an economic crisis, leading to difficulties in meeting various social needs.

Unemployment is high. More than 400,000 Latvians live outside the country in order to support themselves or their families. There are few EU projects available, and partial financing of projects is difficult to obtain.

Much social work is done by volunteers. NGOs account for some 50 per cent of social welfare activities, but compensation from the public sector is not sufficient to meet the expenditure of the organisations involved. Meanwhile, many of the homeless remain unregistered, with only some 1,500 people using publicly supplied overnight stay facilities. A 'Family Project' has been adopted at political level but still awaits implementation. The authorities are seeking increased cooperation with other interested parties in order to further develop expertise and methodology, but concrete ideas have yet to be identified.

The conclusion of the Working Group was that conditions for joint projects are not yet ideal, notably for economic reasons. There is as yet little in the way of 'project thinking' and experience from previous projects is largely lacking, even though there is considerable interest in identifying new projects. In the majority of cases the needs are very high.

The Patvērum Children's Day Care Centre

The working Group visited the Patvērum Children's Day Care Centre located in Riga, Latvia. Managed by the Salvation Army and serving both as a centre for day-care and for afternoon activities for young people aged 14 to 18, the Centre receive the youth concerned on a needs-based recommendation by the city's social services.

The centre offers recreational opportunities, study assistance and meals. The majority of children come from families facing numerous problems. Many of the parents have themselves grown up in parentless conditions and often lack even elementary experience from ordinary family life and child care. In addition, many suffer from drug addiction. There is some cooperation with the school authorities as regards individual children. About a third of the operational budget is defrayed by the city of Riga, with donations covering the remainder.

The centre is at present engaged in an EU project aimed at involving the entire family of the individual child, including the education, support and counselling of parents. The aim is for the facility to evolve into a 'Family Centre' in order to be able better to meet the families' numerous needs. The Group gained the impression that the activity in question was under-funded, even as it was fortunate enough to be able to rely on a highly committed personnel.

The Krize Social Services Centre

The Krize Social Services Centre is financed via public money and donations, benefiting both young people and adults. It targets youth in foster families, offering them, *inter alia*, so-called 'drama therapy'. It also serves as an emergency centre for young people in general, including women, many of them single mothers. A separate project aims to assist young people with hearing difficulties. Krize also runs educational seminars for potential foster families.

More generally, around 2,000 children in Latvia are placed in special children's homes. A certain inertia can be observed among politicians and officials when it comes to finding alternatives to this kind of placement, even as it has been shown that foster homes are more cost-effective. Another 6,000 children are placed in so-called 'Guardian Care' homes, a kind of protected placement for children presenting special difficulties.

The Group encountered an interest among those concerned to develop their activities, not least when it comes to family education. Valuable project experience exists, for instance in improving the quality of foster home conditions and notably as regards enhancing the prospect of successful placement. Krize has ten centres located across Latvia. In addition, it is engaged in activities aimed at helping young people placed in various institutions, victims of crime and women exposed to violence. Summer courses are offered for specific professional categories - such as police officers and teachers - to learn how best to handle expressions of violence.

The Working Group concluded that Krize possesses both experience and a strong commitment to working on a variety of projects, and in developing cooperation with other interested parties.

The Latvian Red Cross Night Shelter

The Latvian Red Cross Night Shelter forms part of a wide-ranging activity which it pursues across Latvia - involving 13,000 members and 1,600 volunteers. One part of the shelter offers new syringes, hospital care and the distribution of food, and can receive up to 140 people at once. This being said, the facilities are in relatively poor conditions, with patrons having to sleep on mattresses in big dormitory halls. The accent is placed on health care, assistance and the serving of meals.

The Working Group concluded that the night shelter in question was professionally run. It at this stage does not seek partners, but funding is in short supply.

The Nõmme Child Welfare Organization, Tallinn.

The Nõmme Child Welfare Organisation in Tallinn is an NGO active across Estonia in the business of distributing food to needy children. Around 1,000 families are supplied on a daily basis. Nõmme also offers camp stays, parent support and operates three child care centres nationwide.

The Centre visited by the Group is oriented toward pre-school children, including those with special needs, but also parents receive guidance and support. As part of an NGO, the Centre can also accommodate young people and women on a flexible emergency basis. There is cooperation between this Centre and that of Märjamaa - to be referred to in the following - such as in accommodation during weekends from patrons of Märjamaa and vice versa.

The Working Group gained the impression that the organisation in question is highly results-oriented and open to many different forms of cooperation with others. There is a wish to help organise the parents concerned and to enhance collaboration between the school and the families. The work relies predominantly on donations and, to a lesser degree, on contributions from the City of Tallinn. There is as yet no sufficient basis for running an EU-project, but the interest in one day being able to do so is definitely there.



The city of Tallinn, including its Social Services Department

The Group held meetings with the Director of the Tallinn Social Services Department, as well as with representatives of four NGOs: one involving foster parents, another representing ordinary parents, a third running a 'Food Bank', and a fourth set up on behalf of the wider families of those supported.

The Tallinn Municipality runs family centres, social centres and institutions for young drug addicts. Much of the work is done by charities, with part of the activities enjoying the support of the municipality. The NGOs are in permanent need of donations and money collected in various campaigns. The social situation in Tallinn is better than in other parts of Estonia. The country finds itself in an economic crisis and suffers high unemployment. 300,000 Estonians work abroad to support themselves and sometimes their families.

The Working Group concluded that the country's social needs are large and manifold. Children and poor families form the focus of attention.

The Municipality of Märjamaa

The Working Group visited the Municipality of Märjamaa, situated some 50 km outside Tallinn, including its Social Services Department, and met with the Deputy Mayor, two social workers and the representative of an NGO working with families.

Märjamaa has 7,000 inhabitants but only one social worker. While located in a relatively sparsely populated area, Märjamaa's proximity to Tallinn permits many of the inhabitants to commute daily

to the capital. Märjamaa has experience in project work with others, including with the Swedish municipality of Vara.

The Working Group concluded that Märjamaa, in spite of its limited economic resources, manifests considerable interest in identifying projects and areas of cooperation with others. This holds in particular for work with families, children and schools, as well as in finding ways of organising family structures, education in the area of parenthood, and preventing young people from leaving school prematurely. The already started cooperation between the municipality and various NGOs deserves further consolidation. We found national similarities between, on the one hand, a municipality's work on specific problems and, on the other, that pursued in a municipality with many immigrants. This led us to consider the possibility of mobilising Swedish support in favour of families with a similar ethnic background, in order to support children and young people and to forestall the premature abandonment of studies.

The two days spent by the Working Group in Estonia concluded with a visit to the farm used by the Nõmme Child Welfare Organisation for recreational, outdoor and project activities.

WARSAW, POLAND, 20-21 FEBRUARY 2013

The theme chosen for the Working Group's visit to Poland was, above all, the situation of the homeless. We toward this end sought contact primarily with public authorities and volunteer organisations. Our programme in Poland was prepared by the so-called 'National Supporting Institution', which serves as a coordinating body for projects sorting under the European Social Fund.

The Monar Markot Centre for Humanitarian Aid

The Monar Markot Centre for Humanitarian Aid is a nationwide Polish NGO present in around 200 locations across the country, with a total capacity of assisting 1,500 people. The Centre visited by the Working Group can receive up to 240 people in need, especially those suffering from alcohol dependence, but also the homeless. Staff include doctors and other medical personnel, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and lawyers. The activities are 'holistically' oriented and aim at treating the entire range of problems afflicting those who find their way to the institution. Visits start with a detoxification process, and help is offered in finding work and lodging. There is also the possibility



for patients to find remunerated employment at the centre, and thereby to be accepted as tenants. The whole structure of the work made it clear to us that the primary goal was that of rehabilitation. Monar in addition manages a project aiming to gain a nation-wide overview of the situation of the homeless and to propose measures to improve their situation.

The Centre for the Development of Human Resources

The Centre for the Development of Human Resources is a Polish EU-project aiming to establish a series of norms for social activities in the country. The project in question, started in 2008, is to be concluded in 2014, and involves cooperation among a number of bigger NGOs and 32 municipal actors. The goal is to identify joint forms of working together as well as strategies, and to establish access to a uniform social service in the whole of Poland. One example of this is to shape a model for 'Ways of escaping homelessness'.

The standard will include a common agreement as to the categories of staff that are to be represented in each unit (social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, therapeutic staff, lawyers) and the methods to be used. An implementation stage is under way, in which different categories employ the methods intended for inclusion in the pilot project.

The model, entitled GSWB, is to comprise plans for how to use all resources available at the local level - that is, both public and NGO-managed resources - in order to best coordinate activities in true partnership.

Canteen and Information Point of the Caritas Warsaw-Praga Diocese District; and the Centre for Men of the Praga-Poludnie District of Warsaw.

Here the Working Group visited two projects forming part of the GSWB project: a food distribution point and a centre for short-term dwelling.

The Social Welfare Centre of the Praga-Poludnie District of Warszawa

This particular social services office busies itself with all types of social work, including homelessness, even though the latter falls primarily within the orbit of the central administration.

The area covered includes 1,500 overnight stay facilities offering a total of 11,000 beds. The demand is high, especially in the winter when all quarters offering protection from the cold - including canteens and overnight stay centres - are completely full. These installations then serve above all to help people survive rather than to assist them longer-term. There is also a contract-based activity of a more far-reaching nature as between the municipality and those seeking help. Here around-the-clock assistance is given, on the condition that those who want help refrain from any consumption of alcohol.

Over and above the emergency assistance, the district also engages in more structured activities to help alleviate the homelessness problem. They include actively searching out those in need, not least in order to gain a better grasp of the total number of homeless in the district.

The Mazovian Centre of Social Policy

Our visit to the Mazovian Centre of Social Policy provided us with a useful overview of how the City of Warsaw works to offer social support, economic assistance, help against alcohol abuse, aid to the handicapped, support for foster families and in the fight against homelessness.

The City of Warsaw runs 28 soup-kitchens serving 5,300 meals a day. Efforts are made to orient the needy toward 'low-threshold' alternatives available. Medical assistance is also on offer, especially since many of the homeless are without insurance (linked as the latter is to employment). Volunteers from the organisation 'Doctors of Hope' stand ready to assist in numerous locations.

Work is underway to establish a data base that can provide an estimate of the cost to society of social exclusion, including that associated with taking insufficient action. The model goes under the name of 'Social Platform to Solve Social Problems' and is now being implemented. Training of leading staff is likewise under way, and a network connecting various decision-makers is being established in order to spread information about the new data base.

The Open Door Association

The Open Door Association is run by an NGO, with the focus on those at risk of becoming homeless, and on building a better model for socially integrating those already without shelter. Twenty homeless people are provided with housing. They can stay for up to three years, during which time they have access to therapy, further education, help in better managing their finances, contact with potential employers and 'social mobilisation', by which is meant the identification of

families and friends of those concerned, so that these can start helping out.

Toward the end of their stay, those assisted may voluntarily engage in searching out others in need who avoid seeking contact with organisations that can help them. Over half of those who benefit from the programme recover socially.

Another point raised in many of the places we visited was that public support for the activities accounted for only about half of the costs involved, while the remainder had to be covered by donations or via foundations.

The Wola District Social Help Centre

The Wola District Social Help Centre can be truly said to deal with all aspects of assistance. Here are specialists focussing on various particular needs, but the institution at the same time feels it has an overall responsibility for the person's total situation. Work at the level of the local social district is based on the country's Social Aid Act and departs from the notion that the basic needs of families and individuals must be covered. However, it is not a 'rights legislation' in the sense that all those without income have a right to assistance. Rather, the assistance comes with certain strings attached, such as requiring the person in question to show a will to cooperate and to mobilise his or her own capabilities in the process.

The support given may be of a continuing or temporary character, depending on the situation at hand. The areas covered include poverty, orphans, the homeless, the handicapped, the long-term ill, violence in the family, children's rights, refugees, alcohol and drug addiction, or post-prison rehabilitation.

Caritas, Poland

The Working Group paid a visit to the Caritas Poland Head Office, as well as to an overnight stay facility. Caritas is the vehicle of the Catholic Church in the field of social assistance, and incidentally also the biggest NGO in the country. Everyone seeking help is received, regardless of faith or nationality.

Caritas has a long tradition of working on social issues and tries, through its various branches, to respond to different types of needs. It is present across the country and is busy building networks connecting congregations, schools, the public sector and NGOs. Caritas, too, forms part of the GSWB, and attempts to adapt its activities accordingly.

Other projects

The Working Group in addition visited three institutions of a 'low threshold' character, namely an overnight stay facility, two soup-kitchens and the previously mentioned 'Open Door' facility. In the course of these visits the Working Group was given comprehensive information regarding the various activities. We were also able to visit the actual facilities, which were of a limited size when considering the number of those given assistance.



HELSINKI, FINLAND, 8 – 9 APRIL 2013

The focus of the study visit above all lay on issues relating to drug and alcohol abuse and

dependency, especially work to assist and rehabilitate people thus affected - whether in public activities or those within volunteer organisations (NGOs).

General comments regarding the situation in Finland

The majority of Finland's 5 million-strong population live in the major cities, one million of them in the larger Helsinki area. Social and economic conditions in Finland show an overall resemblance with those in other countries in Western Europe, even though differences exist.

Alcoholism is the incomparably biggest drug problem. Heroin abuse is limited, but an increasing number of people use Subutex intravenously, to which should be added a large group of people addicted to amphetamines.

Following an HIV epidemic among addicts there was broad political agreement to modify policies as regards treatment. After previously having followed the Swedish model based on restriction and repression, the new model emphasised '*harm reduction*'. This signifies an emphasis on protecting and saving lives, and there is now a law obliging municipalities to help addicts obtain new syringes if needed.

Drug abuse care is managed by so-called 'A-clinics' - which form an out-patient care resource - and by foundations.

'Socca' - a centre of competence in the social field

'Socca' is one of eleven independent and publicly financed centres that try to develop ideas and methods within the social field together with other interested parties - in areas as varied as child care and social agencies.

Researchers and the staff concerned work empirically to define development projects and find ways to implement them. One example is a 'book of recipes' listing different problems and recipes for how they might be remedied.

The Uusix Workshops

These workshops address themselves to former drug abusers, people with psychological disabilities, and immigrants - all in the 18-63 age group.

The length of the duration at the workshops varies from between three and nine months, with a four-hour work day. Two teams share the workload - each working half-time - on the basis of three-month contracts. Two hundred and fifty people can be received simultaneously. Work in eighteen fields is offered, including carpentry, textiles, jewellery, recycling, second-hand sales and the sale of



whatever is produced. The basic materials used are donated by companies or by private sources, and then recycled.

Apart from a works manager, a social worker is at hand to coordinate the assistance given by the several authorities involved, and to offer general support. People with an immigrant background are offered lessons in Finnish once a week.

Participants receive 9 € per month, coming in excess of social assistance amounting to 460 € per month, a meal per day and a monthly ticket for using Helsinki public transport services.

The Helsinki Deaconess Institute

The Helsinki Deaconess Institute has been in existence since 1867 and has 1,600 employees, 600 of them medical doctors. The activities, with a turnover of 130 million € per year, are broad in nature and encompass several different projects, from the care of drug abusers to that of elderly people and children. Sixty percent of the funding is public.

'Housing first'

In 1993 the Deaconess Institute took on the idea of 'Housing first', in which the emphasis is placed on lasting contact with the person concerned, and where drug independence or other personal modifications of behaviour are not requested unless the person in question agrees. The aim is to create an increased sense of responsibility on the part of participants, via education and work experience.

Finland in 2008 decided to close all common lodging-houses and instead try to ensure private living quarters for everybody in need. The goal is to eliminate homelessness by 2015. Ten of the country's biggest municipalities participate in a project to build the necessary housing.

Seeing that landlords do not necessarily want to have drug abusers as tenants, the Deaconess Institute uses its own properties involving small apartments. All in all they are 540 in number, in nine different locations across the country.

Critics maintain that this arrangement serves to encourage the abuse in question, to which the Deaconess Institute retorts that it is still a better option than sleeping outdoors, and that the system works. Thus far only five people have been ejected from the arrangement.

The Social Services Department refers clients to the Deaconess Institute opportunity and says there is a waiting line.

Sentido

The work project Sentido is oriented toward people facing difficulties in finding work, such as the long-term unemployed, migrants and the handicapped. Three employees work within the framework of the project.

One part of the work is to manage the properties within the area, but some people are also placed with social undertakings and other places of work. Employers are given support via coaches and salary complements for those employed. Should participants not fully succeed, they may return for a period of time to Sentido. Some special training in managing the job at hand is offered as part of the project.

Thus far 44 people have reached permanent employment in the open labour market thanks to this initiative.

Community Training

The Deaconess Institute also runs an educational project, *Cable*, along the lines of a Dutch programme. The aim is to develop an 'active citizenship', and the participants may be clients or staff, with some even coming from the Helsinki city administration.

Over the course of seven encounters participants present and try to 'define' themselves, try to learn more about the other participants and events in the society surrounding them. A quarter of the staff have followed this course and as a result no longer see their customers as 'clients' but rather as

partners in cooperation. Evaluations have shown participants to feel higher self-esteem and to harbour greater hope for a positive change.

The Citizens' Arena

Five hours a day are set aside for general encounters, ranging from coffee breaks to cultural events. All are welcome. The objective is to reduce prejudice and exclusion, while providing social training and greater responsibility for the various activities undertaken. There were 10,000 visitors in 2011.

The 'A-Clinic, Vinkki

There are 'A-Clinics' all over the country, run either by municipalities or in the form of foundations. Vinkki is one of four in Helsinki, its target group being intravenous drug abusers. You can remain anonymous and treatment is cost-free. In 2012 there were 12,741 visits, and a million syringes were distributed. The most common drugs used are amphetamines, followed by Subutex and so-called 'design drugs' and benzodiazepines.

The activity forms part of the country's *harm reduction* policy introduced following an HIV epidemic between 1998 and 2000. The clinics do their best to provide support but the focus remains on the distribution of syringes and testing. The goal is to reach those not identified by the social services, which is why anonymity becomes so important. In Finland syringes can be bought in pharmacies, but for those who cannot afford them the syringe exchange becomes important.

Visitors are offered health and social advisory services related to risks associated with drug abuse. Beside the syringe exchange there is testing for HIV, hepatitis, chlamydia, gonorrhoea and pregnancy. In 2012 there was not a single newly infected HIV case and the number of hepatitis C cases have decreased dramatically. In Sweden practically all intravenous drug abusers also have hepatitis C.

The clinic also offers vaccination against hepatitis A and B. Wounds and infections are also treated. There are opportunities to shower, rest, consult medical doctors and seek help in finding hospital care.

The main focus is on help and health promotion, rather than checking on and modifying patterns of abuse.



Vailla vakinaista asuntoa (Association for the homeless)

The *Vailla vakinaista asuntoa Association* is run by its users and has 20 employees, of which five have themselves endured homelessness. At the outset the only activity consisted in producing a newspaper, while today the centre manages a day centre where food is served and leisure time activities are on offer. There is also an all-night café, visiting activities (which are, incidentally, not carried out by the city itself) and the low- threshold '*Housing First*' activity with 28 flats at its disposal - all in premises rented by the Diakonianstalt.

The Association is financed by the '*Penningautomatföreningen*' (the Finnish correspondence to the Swedish Svenska Spel), by the City of Helsinki and via private donations - for an annual budget of one million euros.

Aggreidis, the Helsinki City Mission

The Helsinki City Mission runs the Aggreidis project employing five people, who are located in a setting deliberately fashioned to appeal to the activity's target group. The latter consists of young violent offenders, some of whom have served prison time.

Clients must show a preparedness to work on their violent tendencies, both in defining their problems and the goals sought. The method is called 'reflective cooperation' and aims at developing ways of handling one's aggressiveness. The work does not *a priori* seek to get the clients to stop their drug abuse or change their lifestyle, unless they truly want to do so.



Out of the some 300 people received so far, only four have been women. Support can be anything from individual consultation to recurrent meetings over several years. People come to Aggreidi upon the recommendation of the police authorities, the social services or the prison system. Visitors can remain anonymous.

The Norden Welfare Centre, Finland

The Norden Welfare Centre in Finland manages one part of a research and development centre that deals with alcohol and drug related issues - this following a fusion of Norden activities in 2009 in all the Nordic countries. In Denmark the focus is on work with the hard-of hearing, while the Stockholm main office deals with general welfare issues.

Beside research activities, the Centre organises seminars and conferences, issues publications and engages in spreading new knowledge, above all to researchers and professional experts.

One current project takes up the evolution of drug policies in the Nordic countries, especially the results of activities aiming at *harm reduction*.

The Matilda Wrede Institute

The Matilda Wrede Institute is a jointly managed Finnish-Swedish competence centre run as a share-holding company with participating municipalities as part-owners. In accordance with Finnish legislation, such centres should have as their goal to "create and maintain a regional societal structure" and relate theory with practice and developmental work in the social field.

The Matilda Wrede Institute lends particular attention to meeting various needs facing Finnish-Swedish and Swedish-speaking municipalities.

Four people are permanently employed, with another 20 active in various projects or dealing with research and development.

There are four priority areas:

- Staff training, development and well-being in municipalities and organisations;
- Innovative working methods, also at the multi-professional level;
- User involvement and practical implementation;
- Evaluations that also serve professional development, that is, implementation of new insights and methods.

The Institute furthermore offers possibilities for students and trainees, clients, researchers and instructors to come together and work in common to develop work within the social field.

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK, 21-22 OCTOBER 2013

This study visit focussed on alternative forms of education and rehabilitation for people who find themselves at a far remove from the labour market, or who have acted violently in regard to women.

The Kofoed School

The philosophy of the Kofoed School builds on the idea of self-help, and the institution sees itself as a 'people's enterprise' that is neither public nor private. Fifty members representing various authorities and organisations choose a board and school representatives. The students' council is given pride of place in the school's teaching. Employees as well as volunteers work in the institution, which is financed by public means, foundations, project money and donations.

All the students are out of work, many are drug addicts or suffer psychological problems. An average 450 students attend the school on a daily basis, while the number of student visitors amount to 4,500 per year. No letter of referral is needed to visit or attend the school.

For every student an individual plan is established, with potential access to 150 courses, whether of a practical or theoretical orientation. The school has a car repair shop, a laundry, a hairdresser's, a garden and a joiner's workshop. Major attention is given not only to the work process as such, but also to social skills and the respect for others. There is no requirement to be drug-free.

The school can assist in offering help by social workers, educationalists, psychologists, medical doctors, lawyers and dentists. It can offer lodging for 48 clients at the time, and engages in visiting work targeted at young people in the Copenhagen city centre.

Students receive economic assistance from the municipality, and can in addition earn so-called '*Kofoed-dollars*', a currency in its own right earned through school participation. The 'currency' can also be put aside and be used for instance toward public transport.

The institution runs an additional school in Jutland and plans to set up similar schools in Eastern Europe.

Office for Social Affairs, Copenhagen

The Working Group in the course of its visit to the Copenhagen Office for Social Affairs were given a presentation of the situation in the city as regards the extent of poverty.

Of those over 18 years of age, 14.6 percent live in relative poverty. Children living in poverty number around 5,000. Single-parent families constitute another major group. There is a slight diminution in the number of the 'temporarily poor', except in the 18-29 age group, which is registering an increase. Affordable living quarters are hard to come by.

The municipality feels it is largely beyond its capacity to do much about the overall development as regards poverty, and therefore chooses to focus on those who face difficulties. Thus, for example, housing firms can get in touch with the municipality if rent is not paid, in order avoid eviction of those concerned.

The city of Copenhagen also engages in '*Housing First*' projects, that is to say that housing is offered even before the individual's social situation has been fully solved, while at the same time social and practical assistance is provided. It is deemed important to work with others, such as with correctional treatment instances. Here, contact is sought with inmates three months ahead of the release date, in order to find appropriate housing in time.

There are an estimated 1,500 homeless in Copenhagen.

The results obtained are positive, in the sense that over 90 percent of those assigned housing still reside there two years on, with a perceived net gain also for society at large.

As for the future, the Office wants to focus additionally on partnerships with other actors, improved coordination, and a larger supply of affordable housing. The present shortage in this regard is seen as the biggest obstacle, but one also wants to reach wider agreements with property owners concerned.

Finally, there is the wish to further develop visiting activities relating to young people and women, as well as with people suffering psychological ill-health.

The Sundholm Activity Centre

The Sundholm Activity Centre is run by the Copenhagen municipality. It houses 18 different institutions, such as a youth correctional facility, a treatment centre, lodging facilities and an 'open café'.

People with drug problems are offered various activities. Participation is voluntary and 33 patients can be received simultaneously. They can add extra money to their social support through work, and they decide for themselves how many hours they want to put in.

Activities include property maintenance, gardening and garbage disposal. There is a laundry, a joiner's workshop, a bicycle repair shop and a centre for the distribution of various items of clothing. The centre also organises guided tours through the 'Copenhagen land of homelessness'. Women with a Greenland background can find work in a furrier's shop. Alcohol abstinence is not a requirement for participation.

Participants can go on from the centre to, for example, the Kofoed School. Around five percent find work in the open labour market

The 'Reden/KFUK Centre'

The 'Reden/KFUK Centre' - financed via public money, foundations, donations and project funding - is directed at female prostitutes in Copenhagen.

Its opening hours are from 3 p.m. to 10 a.m. the following morning. It has a capacity of 12 sleeping quarters for those in need.

The centre offers opportunities for rest, contact with staff, and meals. The clients are all Danish, given that women from other countries can visit the sister centre of Reden International, specially adapted to the needs of this particular category.

Reden's work has a three-fold aim:

- *Harm reduction* - opportunities to rest, meals, health and dental care, and syringe exchange. Four times a month a midwife is available for consultation.
- *Education* - especially social skills. In order to function in normal life, the acquisition of social norms prevalent in society is a key requirement.
- *Bridge building* - connecting with other types of activity and with authorities, such as in health care, social services or drug addiction treatment.

Women who seek out the Reden Centre can remain anonymous. Staff will always inform the authorities about any violence exerted against them, or any pregnancy observed. Between 30 and 40 women visit Reden on a daily basis, with the total number of women visitors per year amounting to around 300.

Resignation – but also hope – in the Baltic Countries

A large part of the adult population of Estonia and Latvia work abroad. The two countries in question have been seriously affected by the economic crisis, leading to a situation where resources are insufficient to pursue social work and meet various needs. The Working Group 'Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion' on 10 and 11 December 2012 visited Estonia and Latvia to learn more about the situation and explore possibilities for future cooperation.

"We learnt and saw a great deal during our visit and were given ample general information about the two countries in question - such as their current situation and potential entry points for our Group in its search for partners," says Sonja Wallbom, who is responsible for convening the Working Group 'Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion'.

The Working Group focusses on three areas: homelessness, drug and other abuse, and children and families.

The following Group members participated in the visit: Malena Bonnier, Stockholm Stadsmission; Christina Grönberg, Stockholms Stad; Mikael Persson, Sensus; and Sonja Wallbom, responsible for convening the Working Group. Other participants were: Elisabeth Orr-Bågfors och Mohamed Hamdi Shek-Ahmed, both from the Rinkeby-Kista Stadsdelsförvaltning; and Sandra Karlsson and Edna Soomre, both from the NGO 'Makalösa Föräldrar'.

The Working Group in Riga met with both city officials and representatives of several charities. "It was not an easy experience," says Sonja Wallbom, referring to the meetings. "Riga wants to do a lot, but lacks sorely in resources. Given the serious difficulties facing the country this is understandable. A fifth of the population live and work abroad. A tantalising figure. This is also the category at the height of its working capacity," says Sonja Wallbom.

Latvia has an unemployment rate of 11 percent, but the real figure is probably much higher. There is no real social insurance. Instead, the country relies heavily on volunteer work and charities.

The Swedish delegation and its Riga hosts found much common ground when discussing early school leavers.

"This is a priority in Riga and a frequent topic of conversation also in the Stockholm region," adds Sonja Wallbom. Young people who interrupt their studies prematurely soon face many problems. We discussed family settlements where we approach the whole family together. This we also know from the Stockholm suburb of Rinkeby-Kista. In fact, two of our members represent that area.

The Patvērums association is run by the Salvation Army and focusses on children and youth from 4 to 18 years of age coming from difficult home conditions. The wide age range came as a surprise to Sonja Wallbom.

"The activities were held in an underground facility in Riga. The staff showed admirable involvement and will, but they were facing many obstacles. The children go there after school and get help with their homework as well as social support. The pre-school children stay there all day. They get food, and can wash themselves and their clothes. A pretty hands-on kind of assistance. The Riga municipality refers those with major needs to the centre, so that they can receive this kind of help."

Many of the children had parents who had also grown up in child institutions, since such placement of children used to be a rather frequent phenomenon in Estonia. Sonja Wallbom sees it as the exclusion of a second generation facing multiple problems. "These are big institutions," she says, "where children have spent several years. When those children grow to be adults things haven't worked out so well. They don't have any parent role models and don't know how a family should live. They often fall victim to abuse."

This is why she finds the parental training that also takes place within the institution so very important.

Following a visit to an overnight stay facility also managed by the Red Cross, Sonja Wallbom felt that the organisation might be slightly too reliant on itself.

"Apart from the overnight facility the Red Cross also offered some medical care for poor people and provided first aid services. But the Red Cross is a big and strong organisation that finds its own form of operation. They were not overly interested in cooperation with others. What cooperation there was took place with other Red Cross institutions.

While in Riga, the Working Group also visited an institution called Krize.

"Krize had many good ideas for its further development," comments Sonja Wallbom. "They worked with parental training and with foster parents. Placement in foster homes is frequent and there are many big institutions for children. Where children are placed in families, parental training is essential. Parents need to be fully aware of their new responsibilities and the various complications that may arise."

Krize had the advantage of having many of its activities linked up with projects. It is a largely independent set-up that runs its activities with the partial help of outside financing and project money.

"They also work directly with young people, for instance in staging theatre plays, which is perhaps a form of activity that is not yet as common in the countries in question. So they were very innovative and eager to find partners."

The journey continued on to Estonia, a country sharing many of the problems facing Latvia, even though Sonja Wallbom had the impression that Estonia had on the whole reached a bit further. The Working Group first met with representatives of the City of Tallinn and with those of several volunteer associations. Unlike the Riga representatives, those of Tallinn were not overly keen on working within the project format.



"The meeting with the Director of Social Services and the volunteer associations in Tallinn could have yielded better results. The basic attitude of our hosts was: 'It is not worthwhile to start projects, because before you know it, they reach an end.' They wanted more funding, but they were less keen on running projects. There was little curiosity in this regard, and it was heavy going."

This being said, in the vicinity of Tallinn the Working Group visited a children's home that Sonja Wallbom found eminently interesting

"They worked in integrated fashion with children having specific needs, but also with children from well-functioning families. They showed a willingness also to receive adults and let them stay there overnight, so as to be able to help them find better ways of approaching the problems at hand."

Sonja Wallbom feels that this institution had the right approach and the necessary overview of the issues at play. It also did a lot of good in distributing food to needy children across Estonia. It was therefore all the more regrettable that funding was insufficient.

The institution in question cooperates with a host of other municipalities, among them that of Märjamaa, which is near Tallinn and yet in a sparsely populated region.

"In Märjamaa we met with the head of social services and a number of volunteer organisations. They proved to be very keen on cooperating with others and on trying to identify projects having to do with early school leavers and with support in favour of parents and families. They gave us a lot of food for thought."

The journey concluded with a visit to the Nõmme Child Centre, on the way home from Märjamaa.

"This is a big farm situated between Tallinn and Märjamaa, where the focus is on working with over-boisterous young men. When the Centre started, there was some concern felt in the neighbourhood, says Sonja Wallbom.

The young men have repaired the house and started to farm.

They grow their own food, which is then consumed in that part of the Centre which is located in Tallinn. They make lemonades, jellies and prepare food for conservation. In all of this the

youngsters take part.

The Centre's results have been excellent.

"These young men take food back to their families, food which they have themselves grown. The neighbourhood now sees them, not as a problem, but as an asset. They go to school and feel as if they're 'coming home' when they return to the Centre."

The woman who manages the project and is its 'driving force' informed the Märjamaa municipality that all was going well, adding that she would be happy to receive somewhat more 'difficult' young men for the next project. But she received the reply that the boys she had already welcomed were 'the worst available'. Sonja Wallbom believes that the reason behind the Centre's success is largely to be found in the caring atmosphere prevailing in all the activities.

"I think we in Sweden ought to reason more in terms of care and consideration than we normally do. It's a matter of being with people who really care. Initially, many young men will test the limits and play tough, but they soon enough discover that 'these people care about me and wish me well.' I think that is what heals."

In addition, Sonja Wallbom feels that Sweden could take a leaf from the much less bureaucratic approach taken in these areas in Latvia and Estonia.

"In Sweden we are so bound up by rules-based systems. The first question is: 'Who's going to pay?' There is a resistance to change: 'We've never done that before'; 'It's not been proven that it works' and; 'There's no quality guarantee.' "

Resistance to change is there both in Sweden and in the Baltic region, but Sonja Wallbom thinks that, if so, resistance can take different forms. She therefore believes cooperation could prove mutually beneficial.

"How, for instance, does one develop ideas on foster homes in Sweden? They have many ideas on this in Latvia, and they train families that are to receive foster children. How do they do this? We could learn from them. I believe we'll be able to find good partners in both Latvia and Estonia," Sonja Wallbom concludes.

No 'Correctional Facility' as Part of Finland's Social Policy

Sweden and Finland are two well-to-do neighbours, whose capacities in the field of social care are rather similar. This notwithstanding, the two countries' ways of working on various types of drug abuse or on homelessness differ considerably in nature. The Working Group 'Combating Poverty and Exclusion' visited Helsinki in April in order to investigate further.

"My possible prejudices as regards Finland's addiction care policies as being of some kind of 'correctional facility' nature proved to be utterly false. Finland earlier on pursued a drug policy very reminiscent of our Swedish system, but then an HIV epidemic broke out, giving rise to a complete re-think. The first priority is no longer to get people to stop their drug abuse, but rather to stay in shape and survive," says Sonja Wallbom, responsible for convening the Working Group.

Finland has thus left the more repressive drug policies to this day followed in Sweden. This becomes clear during a visit to one of the A-Clinic Foundation's Vinkki Centres, which offer testing for HIV, Hepatitis C and pregnancy. There is also a programme for offering new syringes. Syringes

can be bought at any Finnish pharmacy, so the programme is there for anybody who cannot afford it.

"The ambition is to hand out as many syringes as possible. They're not counted one by one as in Sweden, since the priority is given to halting the contagion. You get a new syringe even if you haven't handed one in," says Sonja Wallbom.

The authorities still count on receiving most of the used syringes in return - a seeming success since the return rate is 98 percent.

"It's interesting how contagion has come down. Last year there were only 28 cases of Hepatitis C in Helsinki, and none was infected with HIV. In Sweden practically all intravenous drug addicts also have Hepatitis C."

The syringe programme does not require one to give one's correct name or social security number. You can stay anonymous.

"They don't tell drug addicts to stop taking drugs. Instead they create a social contact for them, through which they can channelled further for more help. The task is one of keeping them in shape and alive," says Sonja Wallbom.

Even if Finland and Sweden have over time had similar policies when it comes to drug abuse, there have also been differences between them.

"Finland introduced an integrated legislation for treating alcohol and drug abuse already in the 1960s. In Sweden this came about only in 1982, with the introduction of the new social care legislation. So both countries have dealt with their different drugs in similar fashion and within a common legal framework.

Even Finnish compulsory legislation in part differs from its Swedish counterpart.

"You can keep a person in custody for up to five days, even though this hardly ever happens. If the person's life is in danger there is the possibility to do so, and if that of somebody else is in danger, then custody may be prolonged to up to a month. In Sweden it is six months."

Sonja Wallbom sees the Finnish legislation as being more of an emergency nature to protect human life, while Sweden seems not quite to have made up its mind whether the legislation in question is one of treatment or not.



The Working Party visited the Uusix Workshops for the rehabilitation of former drug addicts. Started as a project in 1997 and becoming permanent in 2001, these workshops are managed by the City of Helsinki. It is a major undertaking capable of employing 250 people in activities such as sewing, bicycle repair, jewellery, wall-papering, and much else.

"They work almost exclusively with recycled material, and cooperate with different industries and companies that offer them fabric, for example. It gave the impression of being a real job. Hard work and few breaks."

The quality of what they produced was very high. For example, they sewed theatre costumes. One reason was perhaps that every workshop manager had an artistic background.

Employment in the workshops was transmitted via the social services, for three months at a time. People work half-time and receive nine euros and a public transport allowance on top of their social assistance. Even though there are similar activities in Sweden, the Network participants were impressed with the scope and breadth of the project in terms of tasks and product quality.

The Working Group in the course of its travel also visited a centre for young men with a violent background. It is run by the City Mission and builds on what is known as 'reflective dialogue'. The men in question get to work on their identity, which is associated with the use of violence. The goal is always defined by the person himself. It serves as the point of departure, and it is up to him to decide when the treatment is completed and the goal accomplished.

"The centre was decorated in a masculine way, while at the same time being very bright and open in its setup. This seemed deliberate, as if nobody should feel confined or threatened in it," says Sonja Wallbom.

Those admitted may come in handcuffs or chains from the time they spent in prison or with the social services. Some may arrive even under the influence of drugs.

"It was the same approach as with the syringes. People are not told to stop taking drugs or to stop fighting. But if they decide to do so they're offered help. There is little in the way of moral preaching or lecturing."

Clients may come to the project once, or they may return over several years.

"In Sweden you would need a permit from the social services to attend once, and then perhaps be allowed to come back a little more if needed. And then you would be told: that's it. Here, by contrast, you are allowed to come back until you feel you've reached your goal," says Sonja Wallbom.

The Helsinki Deaconess Institute has constructed a building next to its offices. It is a former hotel with 150 small flats built for the homeless. There is the same avoidance of moral preaching and lecturing as in the City Mission centre.

"There isn't any requirement for people to be drug-free here either. Since the flats started operating in 1995, only five people have been turned away for that reason, which is as good a sign as any that the system indeed works," says Sonja Wallbom.

The above formed a constant theme during our Finland study visit: 'low-threshold' activities and no requirement that people should be totally drug-free in terms of alcohol or narcotics.

"But nor was it a matter of telling them: 'Go ahead and kill yourself, then, with drugs or liquor if you want!' Rather, it was one of treating people with respect - which is for them to arrive at their own decision. It doesn't work unless you feel that you yourself are the driving force in your life, so that you can then receive help and support from others." This pragmatic attitude seems to pervade Finnish policy in more ways than one.

The Stockholm Roma Net

The Roma are Europe's largest minority, numbering between 10 and 15 million. The majority live in deep poverty and exclusion from the rest of society. Many of the adult are without work, while many of the children leave school prematurely. The Roma population have been and remain exposed to pronounced discrimination in society, also in Sweden.

The European Commission has named the 2010-2019 period the 'Decade for Roma Inclusion'. The precarious situation of the Roma makes them a priority minority group within the 'EU 2020' strategy.

An estimated 50,000-70,000 Roma of various backgrounds live in Sweden. The Swedish government in February 2012 presented a national strategy for the social inclusion of the Roma population. The Network intends to base itself on this strategy as well as on that of the EU, in the framework of its regional and transnational activities work for the inclusion of the Roma in society.

The network's working group was comprised of the following organisations:

Arbetsförmedlingen, Stockholm County Administrative Board, The City of Stockholm, Stockholm County Council, Ungdomsstyrelsen, Stadsmissionen, Church of Sweden, Södertälje Municipality, Stiftelsen Stockholms Folkhögskola and the Sensus Study Association..

Eva Bjurholm, representing the Södertälje Municipality, is responsible for convening the Working Group in question from March 2012 to June 2014.

MADRID, SPAIN, 20-21 NOVEMBER 2012

Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG)

In Spain, the Working group visited the Roma Foundation *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (FSG), which has its seat in Madrid and works in favour of the integration of the Roma population in society. The organisation feels that one of the reasons behind its success are to be found in its inter-cultural mode of operation and in its various work teams. Out of its 736 employees, 40 percent are of Roma origin. The organisation has 60 local setups and its work involves some 112,800 Roma. The Working Group visited both the FSG's central office in Madrid and one of the local representations in order to witness operations at the regional level.



The FSG's work with Mediators

At the project level, the FSG works on connecting the Roma concerned with already existing structures, the aim being to facilitate social integration as well as integration into the labour market. It is deemed of vital importance to create confidence between the Roma population on the one hand and the FSG and its projects on the other.

The FSG plays two roles: one as 'intermediator' and one as 'mediator'. The *intermediator* finds himself in the intermediate position between the Roma group and society, and tries to facilitate communication between the two sides. Meetings between the Roma and the authorities most often take place in the presence of the intermediary.

A *mediator* by contrast functions more as a resource person, both for the Roma group and for society at large. The idea is that either party should be able to turn to a mediator, who will try to explain the issue at hand and promote understanding between the two sides as soon as a difficult situation may arise. Unlike what is the case for the intermediary, the majority of the meetings held between the authorities and the Roma concerned take place without the active involvement of the mediator.

Both the role of intermediary and that of mediator require a high degree of competence as regards the functioning of the Spanish state system, as well as deep insight into both Roma and non-Roma culture.

The ACCEDER project

The FSG is responsible for running the ACCEDER project, which started in 2001 and is financed via social funding. The aim is to have more Roma enter the labour market. In the course of the latest programme period, some 69,000 people participated in the ACCEDER project, about 70 percent of them being Roma. About 46,000 people have found employment following participation in the project.

ACCEDER activities are divided into eight phases, with one team specially assigned to a single participant. Each team has in its midst a mediator, an intermediary and one or more study advisors.

Phase 1: Marketing activities aimed at reaching out to potential participants and making them enrol.

Phase 2: The participants selected are informed about the activities on offer and the need to attend them studiously. Each participant is interviewed and a special point of departure is established for him or her.

Phase 3: Each participant meets with a work consultant or personal advisor for an in-depth interview, in the course of which personal goals are identified and a preliminary plan established to see how these goals may be attained.

Phase 4: The mediator and the work consultant work intensely with the participants in order to motivate them to take part in the project.

Phase 5: The participant receives an informal adult education or, alternatively, a combination of education/training and practice.

Phase 6: Here participants are assisted by the work consultants as they seek employment in the open labour market. This is done both at the individual and group level. Some participants are also helped in setting up enterprises of their own.

Phase 7: The intermediators work in cooperation with the labour market partners and the participants in trying to spread information about Roma in the labour market, and in order to strengthen relations between the participants and companies concerned.

Phase 8: The participants are placed in their different employments and are followed continuously

by the intermediators.

Social enterprises

The FSG has four social enterprises located in different parts of Spain. Their work is guided by the quest for the highest quality in the work performed and by the goal of meeting the highest environmental standards. The point of departure is the notion that each unit is independent, transparent to all involved, and conducive to an improvement in the social condition of the participants.

The Vedelar Gardening and Forestry unit, employing eight people, is involved in gardening services in the Asturias region.

The Uzipen units are located in Madrid and León. The two setups, employing some 15 people, work in cleaning operations in offices and apartments.

The Navarra unit is located in Madrid but is also active in neighbouring areas. They offer miscellaneous services and employ a 25-strong work force.

Ecotur is the biggest social enterprise managed by FSG. It offers assistance in organising events and staffing them - dispatching its personnel, some 300 in total, across the country for this purpose.

The SFG supports all its units in administrative matters, including recruitment.

Assisting Roma children

Ninety-four percent of Roma children in Spain start school at the age of six, but a mere 20 percent actually complete it at the age of sixteen. The FSG for this reason runs a programme to get young Roma to remain within the regular school system and not leave prematurely. The aim is to work with various local organisations to establish contact and dialogue as between pupils, Roma families, schools and others involved. The FSG offers study and homework assistance, and other forms of personal support. Mediators assist in recruiting participants, not least in maintaining sustained contact with the Roma families concerned.

JYVÄSKYLÄ, FINLAND, 14-15 FEBRUARY 2013



The Working Group paid a two-day visit to Jyväskylä, Finland, in February 2013, in order to learn more about that municipality's efforts to assist its Roma population - an undertaking which has won praise at European level and indeed won the Dosta-2011 Prize (*Congress Prize for Municipalities*) and the '2008 TERVE-SOS Prize' awarded by the *Finnish Ministry of Social and Health Affairs*.

As distinct from Sweden, Finland has for long pursued an active minority policy on behalf of its Roma population. Little by little this work has begun to show results, and measures aimed at including the Roma socially have been systematically incorporated in overall public policy. The focus lies on areas where the Roma have for long been excluded, such as housing, education, children's right to continued schooling, and the municipal attitude to the Roma population on economic and social issues.

Jyväskylä houses some 300 Roma, the majority of them so-called 'Kale Roma'. The municipality's work emphasises 'attitudinal change' as a key principle behind inclusion. Efforts are made to have

advisers, teachers and social workers in the municipal administration that have a Roma background; employees capable of serving as models for fellow Roma, of breaking down prejudices among the general population vis-à-vis Roma, and of reaching out to that part of the Roma population which on account of negative past experience have little trust in the authorities.

Roma occupations

The Jyväskylä Municipality's project to enhance Roma employment enjoys financial support from the European Social Fund. The objective is to incite the Roma population to embark on studies, to find employment or to start enterprises. Use is made of so-called mediators, and participants are offered individual guidance. A major reason behind the project's success is attributed to the efforts made to modify the negative attitudes often held by the majority population as regards the Roma, and by the Roma when it comes to non-Roma. Results have been overwhelmingly positive. Over a hundred participants received individual action plans (the goal having been only 70). Fifty-eight underwent practical training (as opposed to the originally aimed-for 12). Sixteen reached subsidised employment (the goal having been only 10), and 11 obtained ordinary jobs (as distinct from the initial objective of 3).

The TuRom Project

The TuRom Project has two aims: the first is to guide the Roma population toward finding their own strengths and toward assisting each other; and the second is to establish opportunities for different groups of Jyväskylä citizens to meet in order to learn more about each other's everyday lives and in this way to break down various prejudices.

Additional projects encountered

In the course of its visit the Working Group was also able to familiarise itself with a project entitled 'A Bridge to Tomorrow'. We also met with representatives of 'The Association of Roma Women' and were told of their success in creating a venue for Roma women to meet outside their homes for the fabrication of traditional Roma clothing, and of the various positive effects this activity has brought them.

RIGA AND JELGAVA, ESTLAND, 4-6 NOVEMBER 2013

The Stockholm Roma Network carried out a study visit to Latvia in order to gain a better insight into how Latvia works with and on behalf of its Roma population. What are the challenges facing the country in this area? What forms of cooperation with Sweden and more particularly the Stockholm region could be of interest? Visits were made with authorities, municipalities and NGOs.

About Latvia's Roma population

Out of Latvia's population of about two million, an estimated 0.35 percent are Roma. Other minorities include Russians (around 30 percent); Ukrainians, Germans and Poles. Many Roma left the country following its entry into the EU, as did many other Latvians looking for a better life in other parts of Europe. Meantime, Latvia's economic development has been positive, with its GDP rising rapidly.

A study visit to the Jelgava municipality

The Stockholm Roma Network during its stay in Latvia was accompanied by Kristine Liepina, from the non-profit organisation Education Initiative Centre, and by Dennis Kretalovs, senior administrative officer at the Department of Culture.

We visited the Jelgava municipality, located some 50 km south-east of Riga. There we met with representatives of the municipality's Educational Office, and with the headmaster of a school using

Roma teaching assistants. We also met with local representatives of the *Education Initiative Centre* and the non-profit organisation *Latvian Integration Society Foundations*.

We also met one of the permanently employed Roma teaching assistants. Through her job she has become the spokeswoman of all the Roma in Jelgava. The authorities as well as the Roma turn to her for advice. We also met with a pre-school class that included a number of Roma children and a Roma woman trained as a teaching assistant by the *Education Initiative Centre*, even though she had subsequently switched to become a primary school teacher.

Projects in favour of Roma inclusion and integration

Unless otherwise indicated, the totality of projects to be mentioned below are managed - or have in the past been managed - within the framework of the organisation *Education Initiative Centre* (CEI)

The 'Integration Incubator to Support Roma Children and Youth'

The aim of this project is to contribute to societal development through a support function in favour of Roma social integration in Latvia.

The 'Lacho Dives!' project

This project supports Roma teaching assistants.

The 'School and Community Project for Inclusion of Roma Children'

This project wants to promote integration and participation of Roma children in ordinary educational curricula, as well as to favour the integration of Roma families in society.

The Project 'Provision of Educational Institutions with Roma Teacher Assistants'

The aim of this project is to award six Roma teaching assistants the opportunity of working in a class room setting with Roma children. The project is managed and financed through public funding.

Roma Rights to Education: Implementation in Latvia and Suggestions as to how Rights Can Be Effectively Realised within a Framework of National Education Policy'

This project pursues research into factors of significance for Roma education and integration in Latvia.

The Department of Culture

The final stop during our study visit to Latvia was the country's Department of Culture. Two issues dominated our agenda. The first was the potential for cooperation within the context of the EU's regional and social funds over the coming programming period. The second was to examine the potential for the Stockholm Roma Network to assist in facilitating a Latvian study visit to the Stockholm region in the spring of 2014.

The following organisations - to which should be added the office of the Latvian Ombudsman - took part in our visit to the Department of Culture:

- The Education Initiative Centre
- The Integration Society Foundation
- The Roma Cultural Centre
- 'Latvian Human Rights'

BUKAREST, ROMANIA 6-7 FEBRUARY 2014

The aim of the study visit was to examine opportunities for Roma suffering social and economic exclusion in Sweden to return to Romania and build a new life there via social entrepreneurship. Toward this end we had arranged meetings with a number of NGOs and policy organisations.

Some general comments about Roma - in Romania and Sweden

Roma form the largest minority population in Europe, counting as it does some 10-15 million people. Many live in poverty and exclusion, and are often discriminated against. Sweden houses 50,000-70,000 people of Roma background.

The Stockholm Stadsmisison has endeavoured to integrate non-Swedish EU citizens into Swedish society. One example is the 'Crossroads' project - a consultancy and support activity for people from other EU member states living in poverty and homelessness in Stockholm. Twenty-four percent of foreign visitors to the Crossroads project were from Romania, the majority of them Roma. The Stockholm Stadsmisison found a wish on the part of many Roma to return to their families in Romania.

The Institute for Public Policy (IPP)

The Institute for Public Policy (IPP) is a 'think tank' working on ways to counter discrimination, enhance legislative transparency, reform political governance at local level, and develop the electoral system. IPP representatives shared with us information about recent developments as regards the political process and current priority topics, as well as ways of combating corruption.

The 'Agentia Impreuna'

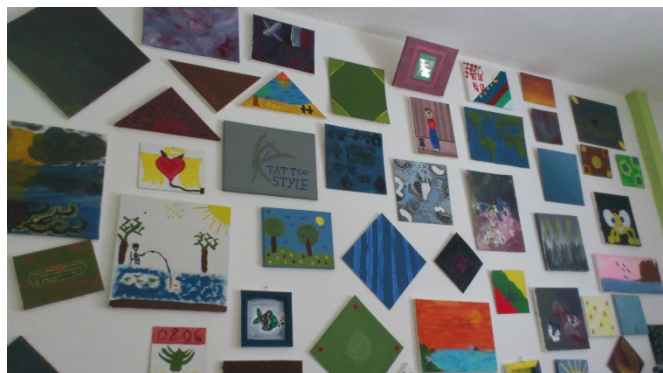
The 'Agentia Impreuna' organisation seeks to preserve and strengthen Roma identity through research and the dissemination of expertise, combined with activities aimed at the Roma population, such as coaching and mentor programmes directed at youth and children, and via them at their parents. The objective is to introduce role models other than from those who return to their villages following stints of mendicancy abroad. The organisation works in the field at village level, but also tries to influence matters at the political level.

The 'Romani CRISS'

The Romani CRISS is an NGO offering Roma legal advice in defending their rights. The focus is on health and educational issues. The organisation has met with success in shaping large-scale programs, one example being a public health project adopted nationally after it was shown to have had positive effects at more local level.

The Roma Education Fund (REF)

The Roma Education Fund (REF) is an NGO seeking to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma students when it comes to study results. The aim is to ensure that Roma children have the same access to education as do other children. The REF is active in four countries, mostly in bigger educational projects - often using smaller partners for implementation at local level. A major part of the organisation is currently inactive, owing to the fact that project funding is still outstanding.



The Association of Organisational Development (ADO SAH ROM)

The ADO SAH ROM is an organisation established to promote cooperation among, in particular, organisations combating social problems such as unemployment, or those working in favour of regional development. The ADO SAH ROM contributed practical information regarding the running of large-scale projects in Romania, in part using ESF funding. The organisation also gave several concrete examples of smaller-scale projects or social enterprises that had met with success.

The Ateliere Fara Frontiere

The Ateliere Fara Frontiere is a pragmatically operating social undertaking that works in favour of groups finding themselves at a far remove from the labour market, among them many Roma. The activities showed possible solutions and financing opportunities, not least via a focus on recycling. In cooperation with the organisation *Samusocial of Romania*, the Ateliere Fara Frontiere has created the ESF-funded project *Insert Workshop*, whose name takes its inspiration from the French *Ateliers Sans Frontières*.

The Social Economy Development Foundation (FDES)

The FDES is a rather small-scale network that aims to support, against remuneration, social enterprises during their infancy stage.

The Asociatia de Ajutor Caritabil (AMURT)

AMURT works with Romanian youth that either live in homeless conditions, or have left orphanages or similar institutions.

Pioneer Work in favour of Roma Education

Major work remains to be done to ensure the integration of Roma into society. The Stockholm Roma Network aims to break new ground in this area, not least through transnational activities.

Sweden did not have any active network in the field of Roma inclusion - whether in the Stockholm region or nationally - until a year ago, when the Stockholm Roma Network saw the light of day at the initiative of Networking Europe.

True, there had been preparatory work, such as the 'Roma Education' project undertaken by the Sundbyberg Folkhögskola, or the Romané Bučá initiative (managed under the responsibility of Sensus). Five municipalities in the Lake Mälaren region have in addition run a network to exchange experiences gained from their individual projects in regard to the Roma population.

"Given the fact that the Södertälje Municipality had gained valuable experience with and on behalf of Roma, including in an earlier national 'Equal-Project' entitled 'Roma in Sweden From North to South', I was asked whether I would be prepared to lead in the establishment of the new Network," says Eva Bjurholm from the Södertälje Municipality.

Various volunteer organisations participate in the project, such as Stadsmissionen, Romani e Glinda, representatives of the City of Stockholm, the Municipalities of Botkyrka and Haninge, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, the Arbetsförmedlingen and the ESF.

"There are around 25 of us participating in the Network, and a very good mixture of people. It took us only a few months to get going, given the strong interest in the issue that has arisen as a result of the Swedish government's new strategy in favour of Roma inclusion," says Eva Bjurholm.

As is the case with all projects of Networking Europe, transnational cooperation is key. The

Working Group is to work in favour of the exchange of knowledge and experience as among countries, organisations and projects within the EU, especially in the Baltic Sea region.

"These countries have met with greater or lesser success in this area and have been more or less active. It is our task to favour an exchange of experiences and insights gained, and to set in motion a learning process. We hope to establish projects of cooperation with the countries concerned in time for the start of the new EU programme period in 2014."

Two study visits have been carried out by the Network: to the organisation Fundación de Gitanos in Madrid, Spain, as well as to the Jyväskylä Municipality in Finland, in what became a highly informative experience.

"Finland is one of the few European countries to have throughout employed a minority policy in regard to the Roma population, and one which has slowly but surely begun to yield results. Various measures and systems concerning the Roma have found their way into the Finnish constitution in a very positive manner. This shows up at the grassroots level in the work carried out by municipalities," says Eva Bjurholm.

At the municipal level this concerns housing, education, the uninterrupted schooling of children, and involves how the municipalities deal with the Roma population in the social and economic fields.

"The Jyväskylä municipality has dealt with this particular minority population and its special conditions differently from what is often the case in their Swedish counterparts. Roma are employed as teachers, managers of leisure time activities centres, advisers in the municipal administration and so on."

Even though measures such as these are rarely to be found in Sweden, things are beginning to happen there, too, according to Eva Bjurholm, following the Swedish government's selection of five pilot project municipalities for the purposes of Roma inclusion. She regrets, however, that none of these are in the Stockholm region.

"The municipalities in question have five years to use their specially allotted funding to create structures for cooperation with their local Roma populations in order to meet their needs, such as in education for both children and adults, public health and professional training."

The Roma population is not uniform, but should rather be seen as consisting of several distinct groups.

"The Roma themselves say that they are composed of five or six different sub-groups, with distinct geographical origins in Europe. For the Swedish authorities it therefore becomes important not only to prevent discrimination by the majority of citizens vis-à-vis the Roma, but also as far as possible to avoid competition among these sub-groups.

Eva Bjurholm openly admits that work to include the Roma is not without complications.

"It's a major challenge and a give-and-take process. We in the majority must approach the Roma with respect and with a readiness to listen. Traditionally, our society at large has tended to look down on the Roma and discriminate against them. The minority has had good reason to feel suspicious as to our intentions: 'What do they want from us now?' On whose conditions are the Roma to be included in today's society?"

The question of how far to take inclusion and what the term actually signifies is far from evident.

"Do we draw the line at the point where the Roma become economically self-sufficient, or where they abandon traditional clothing? Who sets the limit?"

Eva Bjurholm says that Roma culture relies heavily on family traditions, family cohesion and a traditional patriarch system which also entails a lack of equality. Age is important, with the elderly having a superior position, to which younger members have to pay due respect.

"This poses a challenge in our work. Those of us who represent the overall society and its authorities have to show great respect for a population that has suffered exclusion over centuries. We have to listen carefully to their wishes and complaints. And there's definitely a contradictory situation here."

Eva Bjurholm believes that the Swedish government strategy for Roma inclusion is indicative of how the government and authorities will over time approach other minority groups.

"Previously, the strategy was more one of 'assimilate or disappear'. Now, however, I believe that the strategy adopted vis-à-vis the Roma may serve as an inspiration for all types of integration, and for inclusion in regard to more recently formed minorities."

Successful Roma Inclusion with the Aid of Roma Involvement

By actively involving Roma participation in studies, working life and society, the Finnish Municipality of Jyväskylä has been successful in including its Roma population. A vital component has been to ensure a high degree of personal commitment from the Roma themselves.

In the course of a Stockholm County Administrative Board conference on the strategy of the Swedish government for Roma inclusion in December, Networking Europe organised a presentation by Ritva Anttonen and Kirsi Florin, both of them active in promoting Roma inclusion in the city of Jyväskylä.

Ritva Anttonen, Head of the Social Department in the city of Jyväskylä, told the participants of their decade-long work on Roma issues. Jyväskylä, a mid-size city in the middle of Finland, houses some 500 Roma. In 2003, a working group on Roma issues was set up. By 2009 a Roma political programme had been adopted at national level.

"The Health Ministry established a major working group where also Roma participated. It focussed on assisting Roma children in school and adult Roma in studies and working life, but also worked on promoting the Roma language, Roma culture and equality with others.

She adds that the programme is also meant to counter discrimination and ensure that the Roma population can participate and co-decide in the matters that concern them.

Work on Roma issues in Finland takes place at three levels: nationally, regionally and locally. And it is on this last level, in Jyväskylä, that Ritva Anttonen and Kirsi Florin are active.

Kirsi Florin, a social worker and a Roma to boot, says she works a lot with schools, all the way from the primary to the secondary level.

"I assist study counsellors and visit different schools that have Roma youth. I am also in touch with older Roma, helping them in their adult education or in finding employment," she says.

She feels it is a great advantage for her in her work that she knows all the Roma in the Jyväskylä area.

One category for which Kirsi Florin feels particularly are those who suffer exclusion on several levels.

"If a person stays at home for too long, mental problems can result. Oftentimes he or she also loses confidence in the authorities. But when they feel confidence in the advisor it's like an eye-opener. They realise they have a chance and a right to live the same life as others."

Another important part of Kirsi Florin's work is to act as a bridge between Roma culture and the culture of the authorities.

"It happens that a Roma doesn't understand what an official tells him or her, and this can have major consequences," says Kirsi Florin.

She also says the work is full of challenges. For example, she often comes across officials who do not believe she is employed by the city of Jyväskylä.

"They don't think I can be neutral and objective, and believe I am always taking the side of the Roma. But when they see the way I look at things they often react positively," says Kirsi Florin.

There are many types of projects, adds Ritva Anttonen. A Roma youth choir, family outdoor camping, Roma language education and physical training. A common theme is the active participation of the Roma themselves.

"Our project received the 'Costa Congress Prize 2011' on the grounds that the Roma were involved throughout the process," says Ritva Anttonen.

This piece of advice is something she would also like to pass on to decision-makers in Sweden

"Please hire more Roma. Let them help you. Train them at work. They can be excellent role models. Roma often don't believe in what the majority population tells them, but if they see that Roma are being employed and involved, then the confidence gap may narrow," Ritva Anttonen concludes.

Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation

The EU's new strategy 'EU 2020' lays special emphasis on social innovation and pilot projects in order to meet new challenges in the field of social welfare. The Network 'Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation' is managed by a Working Group involving representatives from organisations in the Stockholm region having previous experience in this domain.

The network's working group was comprised of the following organisations:

Social Venture Network (SVN), Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, The Stockholm County Administrative Board, Företagsakademien, Su Innovation, Forum för frivilligt socialt arbete, Coompanion Stockholm och Leftisright.

Ms Pia Jertfelt from the SVN is responsible for convening the Working group from March 2012 to December 2013.



COPENHAGEN, DENMARK, 24-25 SEPTEMBER 2012

Bridging the Gap Conference

The Working Group in September 2012 attended a Bridging the Gap Conference held by the Euclid organisation. in Copenhagen. One Danish contribution was the 'Social+', an incubator for social enterprises and innovations. Mr Andreas Hjort-Fredriksen of 'Social+' raised the issue of how we may be able to better grasp social innovations and how ordinary citizens perceive them.

The discussion of what is meant by social enterprise, entrepreneurship and innovation gave rise to some confusion. Examples were given of the one and the other, and perhaps this is how the situation may appear now and in the future. It is difficult to establish clear demarcations and definitions. 'Social innovation' is one such concept which contains a great deal and oftentimes deals more with social development than innovation as such.

At the Bridging the Gap Conference the Group also met the Estonian Social Enterprise Network, a newly established network of social enterprises in Estonia. Riinu Lepa and Jaan Asp are among the founders of the Network. The following week we were able to discuss matters in greater depth with them and their Estonian colleagues.

TALLINN, ESTONIA, AND RIGA LATVIA, 2-3 OCTOBER 2012

The Estonian Social Enterprise Network

During its visit to Tallinn the Working Group held meetings with the Estonian Social Enterprise Network, the only network in the country to give support to social enterprises in the form of consulting and skills development. The network consists of 19 different social enterprises, each with its individual profile. Enterprises involved include:

ReUse Centre, Helping Hand, Tagurpidi Lavka, Health Estonia Foundation, Equilibre, Rosma

The Good Deed Foundation

The Good Deed Foundation is the only philanthropic foundation in Estonia. It supports various sustainable - in the word's widest meaning - projects and new enterprises in different areas of society.

Responsible Business Forum

The Responsible Business Forum in Estonia (Vastutustundliku Ettevõtluse Foorum) is a non-profit organisation which has as its aim to inspire and promote CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) in Estonian society, in its capacity as a centre for competence development and communication regarding CSR.

The 'Responsible Business Forum was created in 2006 with the aim to set up forums for discussion among multiple partners on how to further CSR in Estonia. The organisation today devotes itself largely to the areas of communication and research, establishing various CSR-indices and to working with companies, authorities and other interested parties in order to have them integrate CSR in their activities.

The Soros Foundation - Latvia

The Soros Foundation works to support and strengthen democratic institutions and minority rights in Latvia. It cooperates with the country's various authorities, such as in assisting refugees and other vulnerable groups, in approaching young people to counter hate crime, and in order to promote tolerance and respect for others.

ZIEDOT.lv

Ziedot.lv is a charity portal to which individuals and companies may give funding for different social projects, which are numerous - ranging from the support of needy children with reduced functional abilities to work with the elderly. The goal is to work in favour of social change by making it possible for people and companies to donate money. The basic set of values are in support of democratic principles, a free market and sustainable development. Ziedot.lv was started with the aid of Swedbank.

A social enterprise is managed within the framework of Ziedot.lv that may be compared with, for example, the shops operated by Save the Children, the difference here being that a part of the profit (25 percent) is returned to those who made the products that were sold. These people are jobless or face other difficulties in providing for themselves.

RIGA, LATVIA, 8-9 NOVEMBER 2012

Conference on *Social Entrepreneurship*

Conference organised by *the Soros Foundation - Latvia, Centre for Sustainable Business at the Stockholm School of Economics* in Riga and the European Commission.

The theme, and aim, of the 2012 Social Entrepreneurship Conference (started in 2009) was to bring together social entrepreneurs and promote the dialogue with government authorities about ways of co-operating and of finding a framework for social entrepreneurs that could enjoy the support of the general public.

Networking Europe's cooperation in the event had as its purpose to create new network contacts and to follow closely the debate surrounding social entrepreneurship and its relationship to public

institutions such as municipalities and the central government.

In the course of a panel discussion the meaning of the concept 'social entrepreneurship' was raised, as was the issue of what distinguishes such enterprises from other types of set-ups. The panel agreed that it is useful first to agree on definitions before applying for funding from different sources. Representatives from a series of different entrepreneurs and projects were also able to present their activities in the course of the discussion.

BERLIN, GERMANY, 18-19 APRIL 2012

The aim of the mission was to establish contact with institutions, organisations, companies, and people active in the field of social innovation and forming part of networks and/or who are familiar with networks of social entrepreneurs, primarily in the Baltic Sea region.

The Institute for Cultural Entrepreneurship

The Institute for Cultural Entrepreneurship in Berlin is mainly active in the cultural field. It was founded in 2009 and runs different seminars, such as the one held in 2012 on the theme of ethics and health.

Nomadisch Grün in the Prinzessinengarten

This project aims to enhance the biological, social, and cultural variety in the area and pave the way for a new way of living together in the city. It provides a forum where the local city population can meet to experiment and explore more about ecological food production, biological variety and how to preserve the climate. The seminar also teaches healthy nourishment, sustainable forms of living and a future-oriented urban lifestyle.

The Art of Hosting

The Art of Hosting is a network for people seeking to find alternative meeting venues where they may, together with likeminded others, find innovative and comprehensive solutions to societal problems, especially via workshops. The members are a group of practitioners who support each other in order to explore and carry out tasks in different social areas. In so doing they try to encourage politicians, business leaders, directors, educational personnel and other open-minded people to view the issues at hand from new angles.

The Social Impact Lab

The Social Impact Lab serves as an incubator for social entrepreneurs that are already active in their field or are starting up. The Lab offers comprehensive support for newly established social entrepreneurs, social enterprises and foundations. Whoever has an idea or a social innovation is given the opportunity to present it during a so-called pitching event. If the idea is accepted the innovator receives coaching, facilities, a mentor, the opportunity to organise workshops as well as financial support during the start-up period. The reason for starting the Social Impact Lab was that it was felt that neither the state institutions nor the city nor the free market are able to solve problems such as poverty by using conventional methods.

The Betterplace Organisation

The Betterplace Organisation - in itself a social innovation - aims to find financing for grassroots projects around the world. To make financing more efficient and intelligent, Betterplace tries to strengthen the capacity of the organisations concerned in the area of social organisation and to seek new opportunities. Betterplace Lab also offers an Internet platform as a departure for finding financial assistance.

ESTONIA AND LATVIA, 26-28 AUGUST 2013

The aim of this study visit was to learn more about how social entrepreneurship and social innovation fit into overall society in Estonia and Latvia.

Tallinn, Estonia

Hosting our visit to Tallinn was the *Estonian Social Enterprise Network* (SEV). We held lengthy discussions with people representing social enterprises, universities and the Estonian Employment Agency, including in a workshop session. Jaan Aps from the SEV pointed to the different forms that social entrepreneurship assumes in different parts of the world. In southern Europe, work cooperatives permitting more employment is the predominant form. In the US and the British Commonwealth, business ventures offering society worthwhile services or products are more common, with profits being reinvested for further growth. In Lithuania, the employment of people with functional disabilities is given priority. Estonia is a country where all three models are on offer.

For a company to be allowed the label of 'social enterprise', it must have at its core a 'societal objective'. Furthermore, any profits must be reinvested in the company, and at least 35 percent of the revenue must derive from the company's own products or services.

If we use that definition, there are many 'social enterprises in Estonia. The variety is huge and the services rendered are many and varied. Here are a few examples:

The Union of Blind Masseuses

The 'Union of Blind Masseuses' was created to train visually impaired women to become massage specialists and eventually to form an NGO.

Hingerahu

The *Hingerahu* organisation works with people suffering from psychiatric ailments and drug abuse. The aim is to strengthen participants' self-image and to render them fit for employment. Among the products manufactured are outdoor furniture and traditional Estonian wedding chests.

The SEV started operations in 2012 and to this day enjoys healthy growth. The aim of the network is not only to inter-connect more generally, but also to offer a support function and create an awareness as to the significance and meaning of social entrepreneurship - one means toward this being the gathering of statistical data highlighting the extent of the phenomenon.

The Good Deed Foundation

The Good Deed Foundation is a philanthropic undertaking in the Baltic region focussing on social initiatives, that is, both social enterprises and volunteer organisations having social goals. The Foundation wants to promote structural change at the governmental level to ensure that more social enterprises are created locally and regionally.

The Good Deed Foundation focusses on projects and organisations that hold the greatest promise of being able to solve urgent problems in Estonian society. Once these are identified, the Foundation supports financially the implementation of projects, while also offering professional advice, including from Swedbank, Hill & Knowlton (communication), KPMG, Fontes (entrepreneurial advice such as Coompanion and Almi). In order to construct a basis for future social entrepreneurs, the Foundation encourages the professional development of young people and spreads information about social entrepreneurship.

Finally, issues of current relevance to both Sweden and Estonia in the fields in question were raised, including opportunities for future cooperation between us.

Riga, Latvia

The Soros Foundation Latvia

The Soros Foundation Latvia seeks to combat intolerance and xenophobia, and to incite society and government institutions to take up issues relating to EU integration, 'brain drain' and citizen involvement, especially among young people.

Change opportunities for small schools

The Soros Foundation has started the project '*Change Opportunities for Schools*' in cooperation with 53 municipalities across Latvia. The project aims to identify novel, creative and efficient ways to better use available resources, to effectuate change within schools and render them more dynamic, so that they can become a meeting place for the entire neighbourhood. The background was that many small schools in shrinking villages were threatened by closure. In order to turn the situation around, projects were started, indeed meeting with success. Many of the schools have been saved and have become popular venues for the local population to come together.

Creative brigades

The Soros Foundation manages the programme *Creative brigades* in cooperation with the *Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art*.

The aim is to support creative and lasting entrepreneurship based on culture and art. Social issues are also taken up, the objective being to enhance life quality.

Stakeholders.rs

Stakeholders.rs is a social enterprise which has created an online service giving citizens the opportunity to formulate and propose new legislation. Two proposals originating with this service have been adopted by the Latvian parliament. The company is managed by young activists who at one time asked themselves why they were not more active in pushing for societal change and new policies. They did not accept the standard response that it was all too cumbersome, complicated and boring, and so they decided to try to effectuate change. The project is still under construction.

The Riga Youth Centre, Kanieris

The Riga Youth Centre, Kanieris, works as a platform for cooperation between youth organisations and young people desirous of finding new ways of serving society. *The Youth Centre* has become a reference and support point for the young people of Riga, as they try to realise their original and multi-faceted interests and ideas. The Central Baltics INTERREG-project *Youth Space* builds on cooperation between partners from Riga, Tallinn and Stockholm aiming to foster informal learning and inclusive cooperation among young people. The youth recreation centre 'Kanieris' in Riga, a web-app and informal programmes for learning are some of the many results in this long-term project.



The '*Riga Youth Centre, Kanieris*' initiative resulted from cooperation between various Riga youth organisations and the Riga City Council, and especially the latter's departments for education, culture and sport. We also met with Riga city representatives, who told us about the background to the initiative and the work currently under way.

Otra elpa

'Otra elpa' is a second-hand shop run like a social enterprise. The store is not owned by an organisation. Instead, profits go toward different social projects and organisations working for the betterment of Latvian society. The customers decide in a vote for what purposes profits should be spent, choosing between different options.

Lude

LuDe is a social enterprise supported by the *Latvian Centre for Contemporary Arts*. It tries to preserve and promote the knowledge possessed by elderly people in the art of carpet weaving - therein using waste from textile factories and unsold produce from second-hand stores. The employment of elderly people, often of modest means, offers the latter a meeting venue and a way out of social isolation.



Mammu

Mammu is a Latvian social enterprise in the fashion business, working with young mothers in creating clothing, and in particular scarves. Mammu is operating according to the so-called Graamen principles. The primary purpose is to ensure that young mothers lacking education, employment and placement for their offspring in a day care centre can still make a living working from home.

Mammu offers employment that comes with flexible working hours, a social context, professional training opportunities and the provision of materials needed. This will facilitate for them to reconcile work and child-rearing.

Mammu marketing is both different and successful. With the aid of well-known designers and fashion models, it reaches out to a vast internet customer base. The totality of sales is done via the internet.

Social Entrepreneurship: An act of joy

Joy, creativity and even failure are some of the ingredients for successful social entrepreneurship, according to Fionn Dobbin, himself a social entrepreneur, apart from also being a lecturer and responsible for the programme at the Stockholm School of Economics Latvian branch. This he related at the Conference *'In Search of Solutions and Partnerships'*. The Network 'Entrepreneurship and Social Innovations, forming part of Networking Europe, served as organiser of the event.

Failure is important, according to Fionn Dobbin, regardless of whether you are a social entrepreneur or an ordinary entrepreneur.

Mr Dobbin relates the example of Richard Branson, the entrepreneur behind the brand name Virgin. Mr Branson placed his brand name onto everything: electronics, refreshment drinks, underwear and other items. True, he failed in many of his undertakings, but he joyfully pursued in his efforts and soon became highly successful in many of his endeavours.

"It is important and normal to fail. This is something you have to accept when you're an entrepreneur. Be prepared for setbacks and learn from your mistakes", says Fionn Dobbin.

Creativity is important for an entrepreneur. According to Fionn Dobbin, 90 percent of our creativity "originates in ourselves". Children are creative precisely because they dare to fail.

Therefore it is important that we become like children again as we let creativity loose.

"Creativity lives inside us all. The best place to be creative is the playground. When I set out to create new businesses I try to conceive them as playgrounds where it's OK to make mistakes."

At the same time he emphasises that rules are needed also in the playground, or you will soon have anarchy. It is also important to have 'good buddies' to play with, that is, good colleagues and 'creative recipes'.

Fionn Dobbin tells us about several such 'recipes', like the one taken from Paul Arden's book "Whatever You Think, Think the Opposite". The recipe is, as the title implies, to think the opposite. A host of seemingly crazy ideas have met with success because they challenged established conventions. Another method is to take existing concepts and place them within a new concept, or try to combine different solutions.

One "recipe" is to shape solutions benefiting "the other 90 percent" of mankind. Most products and services are produced or offered for the 10 percent of the world's population living in the richer countries. The remaining 90 percent in consequence offer a large but still untapped potential market.

"Entrepreneurship is always about solving existing problems. In the Third World there are a great many problems, and you can do research to identify the problems and try to solve them", says Fionn Dobbin.

This is precisely what he has done, first when he studied design in Berlin and was about to start his final exam project.

"I listened to a lecture by someone coming from a company that produced toilets. He told us that 2.6 billion people in the world have no access to toilets. In places like India this creates huge problems. Diseases spread and people die."

This is how the idea was born to make a toilet that would not need to be connected to a sewage system (which do not exist in many parts of the world). It would also have to be mobile. After profound research both in Germany and India he created different prototypes for a mobile, sewage-independent toilet.

"A social entrepreneur has to be out in the field. You mustn't be afraid to get your hands dirty. You also have to think about creating something that is adapted to your presumed customers, not to yourself."

He also emphasises that it is about selling products, not about engaging in charity.

"To give away something for free creates problems. If you are given a product you don't appreciate it to the same extent as if you've bought it. There is the example of the malaria nets given away in the Third World. That has often failed. But when you have distributed the malaria nets as part of a business idea, their use has spread much more quickly," says Fionn Dobbin.

He has by now left the toilet business, leaving it to others to run the operations. He is now busy with a new company in Latvia.

"I'm in a constant search for new business opportunities. A friend of mine had a sister who faced difficulties as a single mother. It was hard for her to work and take care of her children at the same

time, largely because her working hours were not flexible, and places at day-care centres hard to find."

These problems led Fionn Dobbin to create the fashion company Mammu, on a budget of just 400 to 500 euros. The company mainly makes and sells scarves. The mothers employed get help with starting individual companies of their own within the framework of Mammu, and each gets paid according to how much they produce. The scarves are designed by leading designers in the Baltic region.

"We demand top quality. People are supposed to buy the products because they look cool, not because they feel pity for the mothers."

Fionn Dobbin feels this is important when it comes to social entrepreneurship.

"Don't make compromises. Social entrepreneurs compete with ordinary companies, and in fact have to be better than they. You have to offer high-quality products. If people feel they are buying poor products out of pity, you will not be able to establish lasting relations with them."

Many of the ideas espoused by Fionn Dobbin build on principles of social entrepreneurship first formulated by Muhammad Yunus, one of the founders of the Grameen Creative Lab. The principles in question hold that social entrepreneurship should have as its goal to assist in the alleviation of some social problem, while at the same time ensuring profitability. Financiers should enjoy a return on investment, while profits should be spent on expanding and improving the activity. The enterprise should also operate in an environmentally friendly way, and employees should receive wages in accordance with market principles and enjoy good working conditions. Last but not least, the work should be a source of joy.

Fionn Dobbin is happy to share his advice with anybody wishing to be a social entrepreneur. This is a principle he also observes in his other business activities.

"You have to inspire others and share your ideas. Make what you do transparent and tell people what you're up to. In my company we talk openly about the money we spend and how we make our products. Social entrepreneurship can seem a little funny, so be open or people may get suspicious."



In his company there is also transparency in the sense that everybody should be able to 'come along'. He also feels that there's no need to be coy about asking for help.

"Seize opportunities and don't be shy. There are many people out there eager and willing to help. They include many retirees who do not need to work but who have a lot of experience, including retired business consultants. Many are happy to lend a helping hand."

Marketing forms a central part of Fionn Dobbins business activities. Through unconventional marketing methods he has managed to draw major attention to Mammu, for instance. He feels that the kind of broad TV advertising aimed at many more than those truly interested in a given product is an anachronistic way of marketing.

"People have to make more choices today, but have less time making them. There's a lot of advertising, but little is remembered. What you remember is the YouTube sequence your friend showed you, or the product he recommended. That's why it's good to focus on innovators and 'early adopters' in marketing. They can spread the message further," says Fionn Dobbin.

For the message to spread, a good storyline is needed. Social entrepreneurship should not be something boring or gloomy that caters to people's good will. Instead it ought to be, as the principles of Muhammad Yunus proclaim, a source of joy.

Seminar on Social Entrepreneurship

'Social Undertakings and Entrepreneurship' formed the subject of a Seminar held in the Medborgarhuset, Stockholm, on 23 November 2012. Representatives of numerous organisations and enterprises participated in the discussions and listened to the several presentations. The event was organised by the 'Entrepreneurship and Social Innovations Network', which forms part of Networking Europe.

Speakers at the Conference included Fredrik Björk from Malmö University, Connor Friesen from the Social Innovation eXchange (SIX), Riinu Lepa from the Estonian Social Enterprise Network, and Tiina-Katrina Kaber from the Responsible Business Forum (RBF) in Estonia. Åsa Stenborg from 'Det Naturliga Steget' served as moderator.

The Seminar also heard a statement by Fionn Dobbin, a summary of which can be found in article form in the preceding section.

Fredrik Björk trained as an historian, but today he teaches environmental sciences at the Malmö Högskola. That is to say, when he does not also teach social entrepreneurship and helps clarify and expound on some of the terminology surrounding social innovations, as he did to great acclaim at the Seminar.

"Social innovations are new solutions that contribute something more than just jobs, growth and competition. They add to society as a whole."

However, the picture is not without complications. As Fredrik Björk points out, economic growth can cause environmental problems. And what is a growth in jobs supposed to remedy? Is the problem one of a lack of money or one of meaningful occupation?

"Social innovation is about changing the way we look at societal challenges. Responsibility is shifted over to the citizens. It is no longer with the politicians."

Fredrik Björk says that the subject of social innovation had an exclusively social orientation 15 years ago, to which has since been added the concern for the environment. Even though there are different definitions of social innovations, the one he prefers is the following:

"Social innovations are new solutions that simultaneously meet social needs and lead to new or improved capacities, forms of cooperation, and a better utilisation of resources. This is good for society and improves its ability to act."

As for social innovations, Fredrik Björk thinks that they often do not lead to major changes.

"It is the small changes that are the most interesting. A slight adjustment or new ways of combining

things. If something works well, that's what it does!" says Fredrik Björk.

The "New Public Management" theory teaches that the public sector should learn from and act like companies in society. This holds also for society as a whole.

"But what happens when the values predominant in business life enter into these areas? Perhaps we should do it the other way around. What could civil society contribute when it comes to social values," Fredrik Björk asks rhetorically.

He also believes that social innovations can bring with them competitive advantages.

"I have met very few companies that have tried them and subsequently found they haven't worked. In those cases they are normally sceptical right from the start."

It can be a major advantage in certain cases to work on social innovations outside the public sector but within the larger civil society.

"In the public sector care has to be taken not to violate existing legislation. Civil society is given more leeway. This can happen, for example, in activities that touch upon people who may be trying to avoid contact with the immigration authorities."

Connor Friesen works with project development in eXchange (SIX), an international network for social innovators.

SIX has 5,000 members around the world and works to connect NGOs, companies, public institutions and educational actors. They all try to bring about social change and find better solutions to face challenges like climate change and social injustice. SIX's work rests on three pillars: conferences, its home page and a series of special reports.

SIX conferences go under the names of 'Summer Schools' and 'Spring Schools'. Here, participants from around the world come together who are involved in various ways in the field of social innovation, leading to lively discussions and exchanges of experiences and solutions. The goal is to have participants return home armed with new insights leading to concrete action.

"People involved in social innovation often feel isolated in their work and feel that their particular problems are unique. In the course of our conferences you will often find ten people in the same room sharing the same type of problem, and being more than eager to share their experiences and solutions. It's a very powerful instrument," says Connor Friesen.

In-between conferences there is the home page acting as a tool to maintain contact and pursue cooperation. It is a very active home page.

Social innovation is a relatively new field and knowledge can be hard to come by. The reports issued by SIX is one way to contribute new insights.

"The reports build on our conferences. They are based on practical experiences of people in the field. They are not the result of work carried out in isolation."

SIX also contributes to policy innovation pursued in the EU.

"This has led to the inclusion of social innovations in the so-called 'Innovation Union Flagship Initiative', within the framework of the EU's Growth Strategy - EU2020. This is a very welcome

development," says Connor Friesen.

Riinu Lepa is a social entrepreneur, and manages a company that ships food from countryside to city and also tries to get people to eat more healthily. She also represents the Estonian Social Enterprise Network, which was established only recently.

Riinu Lepa highlights the difficulty in pinpointing exactly what constitutes a social entrepreneur. On the part of the Network, as broad a definition as possible was sought - one that could encompass all actors regardless of their legal status, especially in consideration of the fact that oftentimes all they want is to get their work done, and not necessarily be sorted under specific categories.

"However, it could sometimes be advantageous to be able to place people in boxes. There are few support systems in favour of social entrepreneurs, whereas in one's contacts with various government departments, it is often good to belong in a category. We have been in touch with three different departments and they all say we belong somewhere else," says Riinu Lepa.

The criteria agreed upon are: that a social entrepreneur must have as his or her core activity a 'societal goal'; that any profits must be reinvested in the activities; and that at least 35 percent of the revenue must originate with the company's own products or services.

The Estonian Social Enterprise Network has 21 members. The aim is not only to engage in networking but also to have a support role and create an awareness of what social entrepreneurship entails, such as via statistical information about conditions in the field.

"It is our belief that social entrepreneurs often are more efficient and less costly than the public sector, but we lack statistical evidence to prove it. If we had a report showing this to be a fact, government departments would be able to see our usefulness to Estonian society. Then they may well instead say 'Come to us!' instead of directing us toward another department, says Riinu Lepa with a smile.

Tiina-Katrina Kaber represents the Network Responsible Business Forum (RBF) in Estonia and focusses on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). RBF was started by various NGOs, only to become an NGO in its own right, before becoming, at present, a social enterprise.

"One of the ideas behind RBF is information. Part of it is publishing information in the form of articles, books and periodicals for the benefit of our members, another is to gather information from them to see better what is happening in our field in society at large," says Tiina-Katrina Kaber.

At present RBF counts only social enterprises among its members, that is, no NGOs. The membership amounts to between 30 and 40, making the organisation a relatively big setup in a small country like Estonia. Work is underway to bridge the divide as between NGOs, the government and economic life.

"We have a network comprising all three sectors. When the NGOs and the government see that there are companies who reason in terms of CSR, overall relations improve. But it's also a matter of advising companies on what they can do. And to show them that CSR can be good for them, for economic and many other reasons."

Tiina-Katrina Kaber informs us that RBF encourages companies to reduce their electricity consumption, and this shows up in their electricity bills. So it is good both for the economy and for the environment. The RBF has also proposed to companies to create day care centres in the

workplace.

"At first the company may not realise that this minor investment is a profitable one. But soon enough they see that employees are happy, such as when they do not have to stay at home to look after a sick child."

She also remarks that companies often notice that they stand to gain from having products branded as environmentally friendly. Consumers see them as a better choice. Companies simply stand to earn more money from doing good in these areas. Many goals come together.

RBF also tries to establish links between enterprises in different countries that work in similar fields or on related products or services.

"Due to the fact that we used to be an NGO, we have not been able to provide companies with much input on the business side, but that is something that other companies can do. What we do is provide the contact. From that point onwards cooperation can start and joint activities come about," Tiina-Katrina Kaber concludes.

The Seminar ended with a workshop divided into groups, in which the participants discussed what they had learnt and how forthcoming cooperation might proceed.

The Baltic Sea Region in Numbers

Source: Eurostat (most recent numbers from the web page, May 2014)

Denmark

Population	5,6 millions
Capital	Copenhagen
Currency	Danish Krona
GDP per capita	44 400 euro
Unemployment rate	6,50%
Youth unemployment (15-24)	13,00%
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	19,00%

Lithuania

Population	3,0 millions
Capital	Vilnius
Currency	Litas
GDP per capita	11 700 euro
Unemployment rate	10,80%
Youth unemployment (15-24)	21,90%
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	32,50%

Estonia

Population	1,3 millions
Capital	Tallinn
Currency	Euro
GDP per capita	13 800 Euro
Unemployment rate	7,80%
Youth unemployment (15-24)	18,70%
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	23,40%

Poland

Population	38,5 millions
Capital	Warsaw
Currency	Zloty
GDP per capita	10 100 Euro
Unemployment rate	9,60%
Youth unemployment (15-24)	27,30%
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	26,70%

Finland

Population	5,4 millions
Capital	Helsinki
Currency	Euro
GDP per capita	35 600 Euro
Unemployment rate	8,50%
Youth unemployment (15-24)	19,90%
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	17,20%

Sweden

Population	9,5 millions
Capital	Stockholm
Currency	Swedish Krona
GDP per capita	43 800 Euro
Unemployment rate	8,10%
Youth unemployment (15-24)	23,40%
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	15,60%

Latvia

Population 2,0 millions
Capital Riga
Currency Euro
GDP per capita 10 600 Euro
Unemployment rate 11,60%
Youth unemployment
(15-24) 23,20%
People at risk of poverty or
social exclusion 36,20%

Germany

Population 81,8 millions
Capital Berlin
Currency Euro
GDP per capita 33 300 Euro
Unemployment rate 5,10%
Youth unemployment
(15-24) 7,90%
People at risk of poverty or
social exclusion 19,60%

Brief facts about Networking Europe

Project owner: Sensus Stockholm Gotland	Participating organisations	32	
Implementation period	March 2012 – June 2014	Government agencies	7
Project start	2011-06-01	Municipalities	11
Total budget	11 313 135 SEK	None governmental organisations	14

Some Transnational Actors in the Stockholm Region

Many actors in the Stockholm Region participate in the transnational activities. Networking Europe has, in the course of its work, managed to identify several interesting key actors. We would like to highlight a number of them and let various representatives from the organisations concerned inform the participants about their respective roles.

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth - Tillväxtverket

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth has been entrusted by the Swedish government with coordinating the country's implementation of its share of the Baltic Sea Strategy, as it works via 36 sectorial authorities and different County Administrative Boards.

"It's a very broad cooperation, comprising as it does 17 different policy areas," says Björne Hegeföldt, competent for this matter at the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth.

The involvement of the several authorities differs in both degree and nature. For instance, Swedac deals with issues of standardisation, other authorities manage EU-financed projects, while the Swedish police works with their counterparts in other EU member states to combat criminal activity on board various Baltic Sea ferries.

"The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth works primarily with the Regional Fund of the EU, rather than with EU social funds. The new programme period foresees, however, that funds should come closer to each other, so as to make it easier to cooperate transnationally using different sources of funding," says Björne Hegeföldt.

The new programme period will differ from its predecessor, in that all the structural funds will focus more on a lesser number of areas, which you can then choose among.

"The Regional Fund will concentrate even more on innovation, small and medium-sized enterprises, climate issues and IT," says Björne Hegeföldt.

This, he adds, will lead to programmes in different countries becoming more similar to each other. And this will, in brief, benefit transnational work.

Even though the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth does not use EU social funding, representatives of different authorities sit on various steering committees, thus permitting Björne Hegeföldt a certain insight into the workings of the EU Social Fund.

"It will probably have about the same orientation as in the previous period, that is to say, it will work to promote employment, including for those far removed from the labour market."

The County Administrative Board of Stockholm - Länsstyrelsen i Stockholm

During the EU programme period 2007-2013 the County Administrative Board of Stockholm (Länsstyrelsen i Stockholm) has acted as host to an 'Info Point' serving the 'Central Baltic Interreg IVA Programme 2007-2013'.

"'Central Baltic' is a cooperation programme involving Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and the Åland Islands. The 2007-2013 period witnessed extensive cooperation in the social, cultural,

environmental and economic fields," says Micaela Tonndorf, who heads the unit for international affairs within the Stockholm County Administrative Board.

Micaela Tonndorf tells us that 'Central Baltic' was divided into three parts. The main programme, duly named Central Baltic from the start, was there from the outset, while later more specific programmes were added and dubbed *'Archipelago and Islands'* and *'Southern Finland and Estonia'*, respectively.

The new programme period will in part be different. The EU Commission has offered a choice among ten priorities.

"Central Baltic for its part chose as its priorities: the competitiveness of small and middle-sized companies; environment protection; sustainable use of resources; sustainable means of transport; the elimination of infrastructure bottlenecks; and investment in education, skills and life-long learning.

The new period will also see a greater involvement on the part of economic life and enterprises.

"This of course also holds for other EU programmes. In the new period companies will have a greater opportunity to become project partners, and to share in the resources made available - and this includes 'Central Baltic'. This is a great opportunity for them considering the funding involved. 'Central Baltic' will have at its disposal 1.2 billion euros for transnational projects, requiring only a 25 percent co-financing share by the companies concerned," says Micaela Tonndorf.

Central Baltic's structure will also change in the programme period ahead.

So far the Secretariat has had its main office located in Turku, with 'Info Points' in Sweden and Riga, Latvia. Smaller offices were located in the Åland Islands and in Tallinn. Now the whole Secretariat will be located in Turku, supplemented by 'Contact Points' in the different countries.

The Stockholm County Council - Landstinget

Matts Lindman serves as Coordinator for the International Unit of the Stockholm County Council (Landstinget), focussing on strategic support for the activity. He tells us that the International Unit at present concentrates on three areas: scrutinising and influencing what the EU does; utilising what the EU has to offer; and benchmarking EU performance against various standards while drawing lessons from the process.

He draws particular attention to the second area:

"If we look at 'EU2020' and its various goals, priorities and strategies, we see that much of what we in the Stockholm region already do is very much in line with all this. If we do, anyway, what the EU expects from us, then we might just as well get economic support from them in these areas, and in this way use the funding available better than what we've been doing so far."

Matts Lindman says that, from a Baltic Sea region perspective, it is clear that, for example, the Finns and the Estonians have done better than their Swedish counterparts.

"Sweden contributed 60 percent of the total budget for the 'Central Baltic' programme, so ideally we should have been able to benefit from that same percentage. As it is, the figure was a mere 40-45 percent."

One reason why Finland did better than Sweden in this regard was that the Finns were better at involving universities and colleges at regional level. Among other things this could have been of help in the often bureaucratic application procedures.

To improve Sweden's prospects, the International Unit has asked Sweco to prepare a study on the subject.

"We've asked them to do interviews with 16 or 17 key actors in the region - with some focus on the Stockholm County Council, but also on various municipalities and the County Administrative Board of Stockholm. We'll try to pick up various visions, projects and initiatives for the future. The aim is to get hold of these and relate them to what the EU wants," says Matts Lindman.

Matts Lindman believes that if this succeeds financing will be possible.

"It may seem self-evident, but it happened to a limited degree in earlier programme periods. If we reason in terms of a matrix - where EU priorities are placed on the one axis and projects anyway foreseen in the regions on the other - then it is easy to spot where the two coincide."

Matts Lindman feels that the issue of co-financing should be raised by Sweden whenever the discussion turns to opportunities in, and obstacles to, transnational cooperation. Again, Finland is ahead.

He mentions an assessment showing the programmes in which the Finns will participate, and what the corresponding 25 percent Finnish co-financing contribution will amount to. These very same 25 percent are awarded at national level to precisely those government departments where the programmes are likely to land.

"In Sweden we have decentralised these issues. If you ask Swedish municipalities in the Stockholm Region how much money they have set aside for probable EU projects, the likely answer will be: 'Nothing'."

He adds that any money available is then taken from the municipalities' account for unforeseen expenditure.

The 'Norden' Association – Föreningen Norden

The 'Norden' Association acts to coordinate priorities and to carry out two main missions within the Baltic Sea Strategy context.

"The Baltic Sea Strategy is the European Union's first pan-regional strategy. It is a strategy for the eight EU member states that constitute the region. In cooperation with the City of Hamburg, Norden helps coordinate one of 17 priority areas - the one entitled PA Education and which comprises three policy areas: education, youth and labour mobility," says Norden's Anders Bergström, the person in charge of this particular mission.

He has also been appointed to lead yet another mission entrusted to the Association - that of coordinating one of the five horizontal areas within the overall strategy named 'HA Involve'. He does this in cooperation with the Swedish Institute and the Västerbotten Region.

"This is about supporting multi-level administration. It involves civil society as well as economic and academic life," says Anders Bergström.

Most often it is authorities that are in charge of coordinating priorities. Norden in its capacity as a non-profit association is therefore unique in having been given this role, which is one of guiding the overall work done by the different participants toward the goals set up for the strategy. The strategy does not in and of itself possess any material resources, and therefore has to use the various financial programmes existing - such as the ESF, the ERDF, Erasmus and 'Horizon 2020'.

"Our role is to initiate projects, form partnerships, implement follow-up and ensure that the potential for synergy among projects is realised. After projects are concluded it is our job to make sure reports don't just end up on shelves, but that they reach the political level. The strategy and its component projects must be allowed to have an impact on how society develops."

The internationalisation of professional training and support for entrepreneurship form an important part of the 'PA Education' priority area. Norden has for many years been developing methods permitting students to shape business projects, which are then matched up with companies in neighbouring countries.

The time spent by students in practical training is used to develop the business projects in question. This is where different programmes may be combined - in this particular case the ERDF (INTERREG) and the 'Erasmus+' (Lifelong Learning) programmes. Different projects which - when combined - aim at reaching societal change are called 'Flagship Initiatives' within the strategy.

'It's vital to enrol schools, politicians, national authorities and so on. The various actors must be involved in various ways. Bigger ones can join the INTERREG project, while minor ones can be part of 'Erasmus+'. Partnerships can be established depending on where you want your impact to be felt. It can be done in various parts of the Baltic Sea region and still be part of the same 'Flagship'."

"Norden does not run any projects of its own in its role as 'priority coordinator'. Instead, its role is to build partnerships and make sure projects take off. We organise seminars and workshops to disseminate knowledge and influence societal change," says Anders Bergström.

He mentions that one problem facing many a project leader is a sense of isolation and focalisation inherent in this type of activity.

"You're so focussed on your own task that you risk no longer noticing other projects aiming in the same direction - projects where one would gain from cooperating and thereby reach a greater impact in society," says Anders Bergström.

When People Meet, They Change!

And People Change the World!

Our years spent with Networking Europe have been full of new insights and sources of excitement. It has warmed our hearts to have been awarded the privilege of sharing all the different projects and other activities going on all over Europe - initiatives where commitment, enthusiasm and novel, smart ideas have come together in finding solutions for people suffering various forms of social exclusion.

What we have learnt as we prepare for the upcoming European Social Fund programming period - and its contribution to the implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy and toward what is foreseen for the Baltic Sea region - is that most things in life are indeed possible! That is to say, as long there is courage to take in and learn from what may appear foreign or alien, as long as there is a willingness to seek new ways forward, or to start over if things do not work out as planned.

These are some of the things we learnt and will take along with us into the future

All of us who have participated in the project have acquired so many new insights as a result of all the discussions we have taken part in within our respective networks, and from all the people we have encountered in the course of the project. We have learnt how to communicate and jointly plan across national borders. We have seen different structures for cooperation between sectors, in Sweden and abroad. And we have done our best to harmonise and reconcile often divergent wishes for expertise development among 32 rather disparate participant organisations. This just by means of example.

And yet, among the most important insights we would like to highlight are the following:

At least one intermediary instance is needed in the Stockholm Region! Networking Europe has, during the course of the project, fulfilled such an intermediary role. Put simply, this means that we have organised network meetings and created contact opportunities for organisations representing civil society, municipalities and authorities to come together and raise common problems and possible solutions. We have ensured links between people and organisations in Sweden and all around Europe. We have built an environment of trust and confidence - a condition for any project to prosper.

Get to know our more recent EU member states! The Baltic Sea region is a relatively new 'macro region'. Sweden has a long experience of working with EU member states of long-standing, such as Finland (1995), Denmark (1973) and Germany, an EU founding member. In order to strengthen the entire Baltic Sea region we need to focus additionally on the more recent EU members of Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (members since 2014)

Use a 'rights-based' approach as far as possible when arranging 'Theme Days' and other competence-enhancing events! Get all the people concerned truly involved and let each define him- or herself, relate to his or her situation, express his or her particular needs and wishes. Also take into consideration that people vary in the way they go about learning, or functioning more generally. Adapt your activities and ways of communicating to suit these different styles of learning, and possibly also to different styles of language involved. Try to relate competence development to current issues. Be as down-to-earth as feasible.

Try to plan and budget with the environment in mind! The 'EU 2020' strategy emphasises the importance of smart, lasting and inclusive growth for all. One of the most salient priorities of the Baltic Sea Strategy is to save the sea from undergoing further pollution. To run a project which, on the one hand, aims to realise the environmental goals of the two strategies and, on the other, involves frequent travel across that very Baltic Sea is slightly paradoxical, and a 'Catch 22' moment. However, reducing project travel with climate change implications is within the realm of the possible, one way being to alternate real-life encounters with web-transmitted meetings. Another way that is now on our list of wishes would be to make the travel forming part of the project 'climate neutral', through the purchase of emission rights.

Concluding remarks

Networking Europe concludes its present work in June 2014, in connection with the closure of the Lisbon Strategy's 2007 - 2013 programming period. This being said, already in the autumn of 2014, the new 2014 - 2020 programming period will commence. The Social Fund programme at national level has not yet been entirely agreed. As these lines are being penned, the Swedish proposal for the Social Fund programme has just been handed in.

Building on the experiences gained, we at Networking Europe nevertheless wish to highlight some of the new proposals forming part of the new programme. One is the possibility to pursue competence-enhancing projects in organisations where the target group includes both staff and job-seekers who find themselves far from the labour market. During one of our study visits to Finland, we studied, among other things, an educational project in which both providers and end-users of housing opportunities could learn jointly. The results for both categories were astounding.

Many of the organisations that participated in our project also welcome the fact that the new Social Fund programme makes possible private co-financing of upcoming projects. The opportunity for companies and organisations to enter as co-financiers in strategic and coherent projects in the Stockholm Region could, for example, lead to a better anchoring of future labour market initiatives in the realities of economic life. Indeed a potential development worth following!

We also look forward to enhanced cooperation between the Social Fund and other European structure and investment funds¹ - including the possible implications of such cooperation for transnational projects.

Last but not least, we of course also look forward to the opportunity of working jointly with both established and more recent partners, in favour of competence and skills development, in finding more and better ways forward for people who find themselves in-between job and study spells, and in ensuring that more young people are in a position to enter working life well prepared.

See you again in the next programming period!

¹ The European Social Fund, The European Regional Development Fund, The Cohesion Fund, The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund together form the ESI Funds.