

Social Exclusion in the Context of the European Union's Third Poverty Programme

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In this article the EU's Third Poverty Programme (1989-1994) is presented. The programme was aimed to foster the social and economic integration of the least privileged groups by establishing experimental actions in the member states. The focus on the 'least privileged groups' (instead of on the 'poor') enabled the researchers within the programme to consider the problem of deprivation not only as a lack of material goods, but as an exclusion from the opportunities, benefits and rights commonly available in the contemporary society.

The design of the programme had to reflect the delicate balances inherent in the authority relationships between actors at local, national and European level. The programme actions were based on key principles - a multidimensional and integrated approach to combating social exclusion, partnership models of organisation, and the participation of target groups. The intended outcomes were the stimulation of public debate, policy development and good practice in countering poverty and social exclusion. The programme was successfully completed and it provided a number of valuable lessons pertaining to the concepts, principles and implementation of anti-exclusion policies and measures.

Keywords: social exclusion, poverty, EU Poverty Programme

Introduction

What eventually became known as the European Union (EU) 'Poverty 3 programme' was initiated in 1989 under the official title of *Medium-Term Community Action Programme to Foster the Social and Economic Integration of the Least Privileged Groups*. The programme ran for a five-year period (1989-1994), extending and expanding previous Community actions referred to as the first and second European anti-poverty programmes (1975 to 1980 and 1985 to 1989). The change in the official title from 'anti-poverty' to 'integration' represented a significant conceptual advance in that the problem of deprivation was no longer to be seen simply as the lack of material goods but as exclusion from the opportunities, benefits and rights commonly available in contemporary society.

Policies and actions to deal with poverty and social exclusion in the EU are the responsibility of the Member States and of their national, regional and local authorities. The aim of the Poverty 3 programme, as with the earlier anti-poverty

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initiatives, was not to subsidise conventional local actions but to serve as a catalyst for mainstream actions in Member States by creating a programme of innovative and exemplary measures. Poverty 3 sought to stimulate experimental action through local pilot projects, to formulate new models of local organisation and to demonstrate the relevance of the lessons learned from mainline policies and administrative practices. It aimed to identify good practice, to encourage policy development and public debate on poverty, social exclusion and processes of social integration.

Poverty 3 was based on a definite philosophy; it had a novel terminology, a number of key principles and a set of organisational and implementation structures designed to establish a programme which had coherence and synergy among its actions at European, national and local levels.

This article describes the main features of the programme and draws out its principal outcomes and lessons.

The Background to Poverty 3

In the late 1980s there was a realisation in the Community that the incidence of poverty, measured in crude quantitative terms as those having less than 50 per cent of disposable income per inhabitant, was on the increase in the Member States. It was estimated that over the decade, the number of poor people had increased from 40 million to approximately 55 million people - or to one-seventh of the Community's population. Second, it was accepted that to measure poverty in terms of revenue was inadequate or even misleading; the great variety of economic circumstances in the Community and the different types of welfare designed to deal with them indicated a wide range of poverty conditions (Abou Sada, 1991: 11). Third, changes in the economic environment, dominated by industrial restructuring, agricultural reforms and the demands of international competition, created a new dynamic for poverty in that they gave rise to new forms of disadvantage and generated greater instabilities for certain categories of people, especially in respect of their position in the labour market. Fourth, while the European Community is essentially an economic union, it has, by common consent, an important social dimension. Over time it has come to be accepted that the Community has a wider social policy role, rather than being confined to the social aspects of economic policies - the latter being exemplified in measures to facilitate the free movement of workers across national boundaries (O'Cinnéide, 1992: 8).

While there was high employment growth in the Community in the second half of the 1980s, unemployment rates remained unacceptably high, being up to 10 per cent and over in a number of countries. For large proportions of the unemployed, the time spent out of work exceeded one year. In the northern countries the problem of long-term unemployment predominantly affects older age groups, while in the south, long-term and youth unemployment are closely associated (Commission of the European Communities, 1994: 20). In the 1980s youth unemployment was an acute problem although the rate had reduced somewhat by the end of the decade. One of the most significant long-term trends in the European labour force has been the declining participation rates for men, especially for

those in the older age groups. On the other hand, there have been pronounced rates of growth in the participation of women. Underlying these trends, however, has been the casualisation of labour, with the expansion of temporary, part-time and badly-paid types of employment. Women, in particular, have been adversely by these trends.

In the 1980s change in the rural economy was marked by severe rationalisation in the agricultural sector, expressed in terms of capitalisation, high productivity, growing surpluses in production and a contraction of the labour force. Up to 20 per cent of the Community's population (over 60 million people) live in rural areas, and an estimated 25 million people inhabit the Community's upland and mountain areas. With increasing restrictions on agricultural production and the difficulties of attracting internationally-mobile capital investment to these remoter locations, the economic basis for securing a livelihood was obviously under threat. As emigration left behind a population of older people and as lower population thresholds increased the unit costs of providing public services, the quality of life in many rural areas came under threat, a trend at variance with the Community's aspirations for economic and social cohesion.

The changing nature of poverty in the 1980s was also characterised by the emergence of categories of people facing new problems of marginalisation. The numbers of men over 55 years old in the labour force had fallen significantly since 1960 and the numbers of older people in the population had increased. Professional inactivity and living alone are factors which increase the chances of being in poverty. Employment changes have coincided with an increasing number of people living alone, and of one-parent families. In the 1980s the number of single-parent families depending on welfare increased without interruption throughout the EU Member States (Abou Sada, 1991: 8-9).

Other social categories of marginalised people include those with disabilities, the homeless and migrants. Migrants, in particular, experience a multitude of integration problems but it is difficult to generalise readily because of the diversity of migratory situations. Zeroulou (1992) states that almost every country in Europe had recorded an upsurge in migration by the end of the 1980s, a somewhat paradoxical situation given the economic difficulties being encountered in the host countries concerned. Zeroulou drew attention to the need to distinguish between (i) population groups forming part of former immigration flows, (ii) people born of immigrants, (iii) new flows, some of which may be resumptions of traditional flows, and (iv) specific groups (refugees, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants). Poverty can be the mainspring of much immigration but immigrants risk continuing poverty and exclusion to varying degrees depending on their origin, duration of settlement, qualifications, gender, admissibility and legal status, and on the systems of social protection and measures for social integration in the host country.

In the wider policy context, and specifically in regard to the extension of the Community's role in influencing social policies, economic and social cohesion had been among the aims of the Community since 1973 when its expansion to nine Member States brought structural and regional imbalances into sharper focus. At the same time the persistence of high levels of unemployment, and the experiences of Community programmes for women, for young people, for people with disabilities and for other disadvantaged groups continued to highlight social

inequalities as being distinct from regional inequalities (O'Cinnéide, 1992: 9). A formal resolution by the Council in 1989 (Council of the European Communities, 1989) noted that the process of social exclusion, resulting from structural changes in society, was becoming a greater problem in the Member States. The resolution added that economic policies must be "accompanied by integration policies of a specific, systematic and coherent nature". The provisions of the Treaty of Rome precluded the Community from establishing a permanent set of anti-exclusion policies so the Council's resolution merely requested Member States to promote or implement measures to combat exclusion among their own citizens. However, the Council called on the Commission of the EU "to study, together with the Member States, the measures they are taking to combat exclusion". The Commission appointed a network of consultants known as the Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion, to examine and report on the nature and extent of social exclusion in Member States.

Additional emphasis on economic and social cohesion followed the passing of the Single European Act of 1987 and the formation of the Internal Market. A Commission paper on the Social Dimension of the Internal Market (Commission of the European Communities, 1988) set out a number of priorities and proposals for dealing with social exclusion. That paper gave particular impetus to the establishment of the Poverty 3 programme.

Basic Design and Strategy of Poverty 3

As a 'programme' rather than a 'fund', Poverty 3 was designed to involve the active presence of the Community in partnership with Member States in contributing to the identification and validation of policies and actions capable of countering current forms of exclusion. The establishment of actions of an experimental and exemplary nature, incorporating the commitment of institutional partners at Community, national and local levels, called for a coherent and strategic approach embodied in the concept of a programme rather than of an ad hoc fund.

The strategy adopted was to invest in 41 local projects throughout the Community and to include all Member States. To select these, each national governing body was invited by the Commission to propose a number of cases from which the Commission would choose the required number of projects within the framework of the programme. There were two categories of project: Model Actions and Innovative Initiatives. The Model Actions (of which there were 29) were based primarily on disadvantaged geographical areas where a set of public and private partners had agreed to a work programme to combat poverty in a coordinated plan. The 12 Innovative Initiatives were smaller in scale and concerned with categories of people encountering specific situations of poverty, some in severely marginalised circumstances (e.g. mental or physical handicap, former prisoners, nomads). Most of the Initiatives were operated by private organisations and their spheres of action tended to be at the extremes of those situations usually covered by traditional institutions. In fact, an objective of the Initiatives was to show how such institutional gaps could be filled in the longer term.

The Community budget provision for the Poverty 3 programme was 55 million ECU over its 5-year term. Of this, 70 per cent was earmarked for the Model Ac-

tions and 4 per cent for the Innovatory Initiatives. Each Model Action received on average an annual grant of between 250,000 to 300,000 ECU from the European Community, or nearly 1.5 million ECU for the duration of the programme. The annual Community contribution to the Innovatory Initiatives was in the order of 50,000 ECU, or nearly 250,000 ECU over the life-span of the programme. The Community budget allocations represented 45 to 50 per cent of total project expenses, so that the selection of projects depended on their capacity to arrange the local co-financing of their activities. Studies, research and statistical analyses accounted for 9 per cent of funding, with a further 16 per cent for programme administration and management.

Given the programme's aims and operating principles (outlined in more detail later) its animation and management strategy was based on a number of structures:

The Commission: General political and overall responsibility for the programme rested with the EU Commission. The Commission was supported by a team of international consultants which, in turn, made up the Central Unit.

Central Unit: Besides supplying the financial and administrative functions of the programme, the Central Unit had responsibility for ensuring that the basic principles underlying the programme (see below) were respected and that its various activities proceeded in harmony. The Unit prepared and implemented strategies for coordinating the actions of the various partners and monitored the use of finances. It also coordinated and supported national Research and Development Units.

Research and Development Units (RDUs): At the national level the RDUs - professionals working part-time with the programme - provided projects with technical assistance in planning, project development, self-evaluation, and communications, as well as in liaison work with local, regional and national partners, and with the Central Unit. RDUs publicised the programme, organised seminars and ensured financial and administrative liaison between the projects and the Central Unit.

Advisory Committee: Regular contact between the Commission and the Member States was maintained through an Advisory Committee composed of representatives of the national authorities.

The Projects: Model Action projects were managed by a steering group or committee representative of one or more local or regional authorities, or of public or para-public organisations involved in such activities as training, housing or health, together with representative(s) from non-governmental organisation(s). Innovatory Initiatives were generally run by specific private organisations, or by subsidiaries of public institutions. All projects were expected to have professional management and high standards of administration.

Besides launching the Poverty 3 programme the EU Commission took a number of other steps to combat social exclusion. Reference has already been made to the Observatory. Support was provided for a European Network of non-governmental organisations (the European Anti-Poverty Network). Within the context of the Community Structural Funds some initiatives (e.g. Horizon) were implemented to help specific neighbourhoods having particular difficulties. The Commission encouraged the participation of Poverty 3 projects in other Community pro-

grammes so as to maximise the opportunities for synergy, especially with the activities being supported by the European Social Fund.

Terminology and Concepts

Before going on to discuss the programme's principles and implementation procedures, it is useful to draw more precise distinctions between poverty and social exclusion and to note how changes in terminology revealed an underlying process of conceptualisation in the Community's social actions.

While the terms 'the poor' and 'poverty' had been used in the first and second anti-poverty programmes, the third programme focused on 'the least privileged', which term was itself modified to become the 'socially excluded' (Georis et al., 1994: 4). Nevertheless, the third programme was established and set into motion on the understanding that it was a programme to combat poverty. While the projects in Poverty 3 tended to use the terms 'poverty' and 'social exclusion' indistinguishably, sometimes synonymously, a clearer understanding of their different meanings evolved during the programme (Andersen et al., 1994). Poverty is seen as a limited form of exclusion arising from a lack of resources, primarily consumer resources, but there are forms of exclusion that may not result from a lack of resources. Social exclusion includes poverty but has been extended in meaning to include the lack of access to, or the denial of, a range of citizen rights. Social exclusion is a broadening of the concept of poverty to encompass three notions: comprehensiveness, process and structural connotations.

Comprehensiveness refers to the understanding of social exclusion as encompassing the connections between different aspects of deprivation and their cumulative effects when these occur together. Exclusion from the labour market is one of the most common forms of exclusion but people may be excluded from centres of power and decision-making, from access to legal aid or to welfare benefits, or from family and community systems that provide social networks of care, companionship and moral support in times of difficulty.

Social exclusion contains notions of a process or of a set of mechanisms by which people are shut out from the opportunities, benefits and rights normally accessible by citizens of contemporary society. This shifts the emphasis from dealing with the 'static' conditions of 'the poor' as a social category to the dynamic processes by which people become excluded. These processes may be traceable to a number of causes, including the ineffectiveness of policies or the perverse effects of policies.

Social exclusion is a structural phenomenon, a perspective which implies that 'integration' means social change. In other words, integration cannot be confined to actions involving only the excluded; solutions to problems of exclusion lie in social policies which society in general must see fit to design and implement. Moreover, changes in the mechanisms of exclusion and the creation of mechanisms of integration can only be fostered in the right direction with the active participation of the excluded (Andersen et al., 1994).

Aims and Principles

The two most substantive aims of the Poverty 3 programme were:

- (a) to contribute to the development of preventive measures to assist groups at risk of becoming economically and socially less privileged, and of corrective measures to meet the needs of the poor
- (b) to produce, from a multi-dimensional viewpoint, innovatory organisational models for the integration of the economically and socially less privileged, involving all economic and social actors.

Projects were obliged to meet a number of requirements in conducting their activities. These became, in effect, the 'programme principles' and the defining elements in the organisational models being set up at the local level.

A Multi-dimensional and Integrated Approach: Social exclusion tends to be related to a combination of contributing factors - low incomes, inadequate education and training, poor quality accommodation, lack of political voice. Consequently, the integration of least privileged groups - the excluded - requires multiple actions which are not a collection of partitioned interventions aimed at pre-defined specific groups ('poor people') but a systematically-organised, interlinked and co-ordinated plan of action designed to respond to the multi-dimensional nature of the problem of exclusion.

Partnership: The identification of multi-dimensional and integrated plans of action implies the participation of different partners, generally including both public organisations and private associations, in a single project organisation.

Participation of Target Groups: To be consistent with the philosophy of social integration, projects were required to ensure that those who directly experience exclusion took part in decision-making processes. This, in effect, is to challenge the traditional way of viewing the least privileged as 'clients' or 'target groups', and to consider them instead as active members of problem-solving networks.

Apart from the three 'core principles' above, a number of other requirements were specified by the Commission:

- self-evaluation - projects were expected to devote a part of their budgets (about 5 per cent) to monitoring their own progress and systematically assessing their performance, as essential elements to good project management
- visibility - because of the need to transfer learning and to influence public attitudes in favour of actions to combat exclusion, projects were expected to publicise their activities and give visibility to the programme
- transnationality - the transnational dimension was required for the 'Europeanisation' of the programme, and for exchanging experiences, understandings and lessons learnt. Transnationality implied inter-project visits, thematic exchanges on specific issues and seminars to bring together a wide range of interested parties (evaluators, partners, politicians, etc.).
- synergy - as already noted, projects were expected to collaborate with other initiatives taken in favour of the excluded. However, this aspect was not emphasised until later stages in the programme (Georis et al., 1994: 6).

It will be obvious from the foregoing discussion that the Poverty 3 programme combined centrally-designed prescriptions for the various actors involved with responsibilities for implementing the programme devolved to local structures. This arrangement required continuous consultation and negotiation between actors at different levels - local, national and European.

Project Actions

Space here does not permit a lengthy presentation of the activities of projects, nor of the processes of organisation and implementation at the local level. It is possible, however, to summarise the more important interventions in the programme under a number of 'dimensions of integration'.

Activities focused on economic integration centred very much on vocational training to facilitate access to income-earning opportunities. Even in countries with well-developed systems of training there are apparently categories of people who are left on the fringes and for whom training modules must be specially designed to integrate them into working life. Other actions under this heading included the identification and support of small-scale producers, strengthening local enterprise (e.g. by improving credit facilities, technical assistance, marketing or human skills), and the valorisation of local resources (e.g. to develop appropriate forms of rural tourism).

Social integration measures were mainly concerned with specific target groups (young people, women, the elderly, schoolchildren), particularly with developing their personal capacities and improving their access to services. Examples were school support programmes, vocational guidance, literacy programmes, second-chance education, language training for immigrants, health care and social services for the elderly. It was common for projects to seek to influence the policies and programmes of partners involved in social service delivery.

Combating exclusion must inevitably be concerned with environmental enhancement and many projects devoted attention to improving living accommodation (e.g. by the maintenance or upgrading of houses), and, to a lesser extent, to improving the physical aspects of residential areas in disadvantaged parts of cities.

Local infrastructural improvements were mostly confined to establishing community facilities in disadvantaged areas, especially single-purpose or multi-purpose resource centres, (e.g. for the elderly or as a base from which various other project activities and services could be organised).

Political integration, in the widest sense, was pursued through involving the target groups in project decisions, researching the impacts of policy measures on local populations, raising awareness about citizens' rights (e.g. among tenants), information and publicity campaigns to highlight racism and the need for non-discriminatory policies.

A surprising number of activities were concerned with cultural and communal integration, as evidenced by the development of cultural and recreational opportunities (e.g. among migrants, young people and the elderly), and the establishment and strengthening of social networks among such categories as young people in mountain areas or 'street' children in cities.

Outcomes and Lessons

The EU Poverty 3 programme was unique in its nature and complex in its aims, structures and operations. Its design had to reflect the delicate - and evolving - balances inherent in the authority and decision-making relationships between

local and national interests on the one hand and those of the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the Commission on the other. This context called for constant consultation and negotiation instead of a simple top-down process of planning and implementation (Commins et al., 1994: 9). Its projects were located in very differentiated settings in terms of socio-economic environments, social welfare regimes, administrative systems and political cultures. Yet the scale of funding for the programme was minuscule compared to the budgets available under the EU's Structural Funds.

Nevertheless, the successful completion of Poverty 3 validated the basic philosophy underlying the conceptualisation and design of the programme. It has provided a number of valuable lessons regarding the concepts, principles and implementation of anti-exclusion policies and actions.

The programme contributed substantially to the explication and refinement of the meaning of social exclusion and to the insertion of this term in discussions on social affairs in a number of Member States. The concept has taken on a wider political meaning as a strategic focus for understanding the relationships between disadvantaged citizens and administrations. The inclusion of a clause on the fight against social exclusion in the Treaty of the European Union (the 'Maastricht Treaty') is an expression of a renewed concern about the processes of poverty reproduction and their consequences for regions, social groups, minorities and individuals. At a more practical level, the programme broadened the social base of concerned people and institutions which have been brought into discussion and action to deal with specific obstacles to economic and social integration (Central Unit, 1992: 8-9).

The relevance of multi-dimensionality as an approach to fostering social and economic integration at the local level was confirmed in the programme. However, a number of difficulties with this idea were evident in the projects. The effective operationalisation of multi-dimensionality in a strategy of anti-exclusion requires not only a good understanding of the notion of exclusion in the first instance, but also a competent analysis of exclusionary mechanisms locally, and of how exclusion, as it manifests itself locally, is related to more global processes. Without this analysis, project actions can become confined to pre-defined target groups - typically, readily defined 'poor people' - and result in a catalogue of diverse but uncoordinated actions. Even when multi-dimensionality is expressed as the coordination of intersectoral actions in response to deprivation, it may still neglect more basic issues of resource provision or citizens' rights. Related to this, locally-designed actions organised on a territorial basis may, even unintentionally, embrace only the local population and exclude nomadic or transient groups. It also seems that increasing the capacity for local responses to foster economic and social integration requires more flexibility from statutory or regulatory instruments. In regard to particular project actions themselves, the programme demonstrated the limitations of conventional employment strategies based on improving technical skills and providing incentives to investment. The economic integration of categories of deprived people also requires measures which seek to bring about changes in attitudes and behaviour and not only on the part of 'target groups' but among agencies involved at all levels of training and employment provision.

Given the structures of the EU, the principle of partnership is essential to its effective functioning - for developing dialogue and ensuring consensus for new

policy directions. Poverty 3 strengthened the notion of partnership by putting it into practice at the different levels of the programme, both in financial and institutional terms. At the European level, it furthered the expansion of networks, associations and mechanisms essential to the creation of 'a social Europe'. At project level, partnership was a novel idea in many contexts, especially where project steering groups brought together government agencies and non-government associations. Most of the Model Actions had an average of 10 partners (Becher et al., 1994: 13). This obviously represented a break from compartmentalised structures and a move towards new alliances and new support systems. Partnerships also provided a basis for the wider transferability of understandings, ideas and actions in favour of economic and social integration. However, in some situations there was a scarcity of partners, or only public partners were available; in many cases economic partners were slow to emerge, while in the case of Greece there was no legal framework to facilitate the creation of public/private entities.

The programme made an important contribution to modifying some simplistic views about the application of the partnership principle in local project actions. Partnership is much more than just establishing a legal structure in order to involve a number of actors in a common endeavour. Project experiences revealed the importance of considering partnering as a social process. This has several implications. It means that the maturation of an effective partnership takes time, progressing through a number of phases. It means having arrangements to modify unequal resources of power among partners, to handle conflict, to secure both the sustained personal commitments of individual members on project steering groups and, equally, the institutional commitments of the agencies to which these individuals belong. And partnerships at the local level must be replicated by similar structures and processes at central or higher levels, especially where local partners have limited power.

In Poverty 3 the principle of participation was intended as a means of empowerment by giving the excluded a voice in decisions affecting their lives, and by balancing the technical input of various experts with the viewpoints of those experiencing exclusion. Participation took several forms in the programme, but principally it was put into effect through the involvement of deprived people in steering groups, in sub-committees or in specific initiatives. Participation of excluded groups, however, presupposes that these groups are correctly identified; but as Georis and Simonin (1994: 13) note, defining underprivileged groups is complicated by the acknowledgement that financial criteria alone are poor indicators of problems of exclusion. This takes us back to a point already made: that effective local anti-exclusion strategies are dependent on an understanding of exclusion (as distinct from poverty) and on a systematic analysis of exclusionary processes.

As far as the matter of achieving synergy between Poverty 3 and the actions promoted by the Community's Structural Funds is concerned, the outcomes improved over time but remained limited. The main reasons for this were (i) the wide gulf between the internal workings of the Structural Fund and those of the Poverty 3 programme, and (ii) erroneous interpretation of the prohibition of double-funding of activities from Community finances (Georis et al., 1994). In any case, synergy will not occur without very systematic endeavours on the part of the major actors concerned, backed up by political commitment and appropriate systems of management and organisation.

The transnationality of the programme was developed by the high level of participation of project partners, staff and target groups in bilateral exchanges, thematic exchanges and seminars. The thematic exchange dimension was best exemplified by the rural projects, which organised a series of five meetings on the challenge of fostering economic and social integration in the rural areas. The diversity of local circumstances and limitations in language competency restricted the benefits gained from transnational meetings. The experiences also indicated that such meetings need careful advance planning and organisation to maximise the benefits they offer.

To enhance the visibility of the programme and of its actions Poverty 3 had both a publications policy and a communications strategy. At each level, several products and documents were published and circulated. The communications strategy sought to provide various interests with regular and relevant information, but in particular to involve the media in various events organised within the programme. Overall, the outcome has been the greater public awareness about poverty and social exclusion, although countries vary in the extent to which there is a receptive climate for innovation in social policy. Moreover, there was a particular problem in that the media were not initially very attracted by concepts like multi-dimensionality, while programmes with medium- or longer-term aims were not of interest to journalists whose editors need up-to-date news or accounts of dramatic actions rather than of slower processes of intervention (Conroy, 1994: 13). On the other hand, presenting an area as a so-called poverty or deprived area runs the risk of having it stigmatised - to the detriment of efforts to put the area on a path of positive development. Projects were also insufficient in number to achieve a major impact on the popular consciousness.

In evaluating Poverty 3, self-evaluation was the principle adopted, both at the project and programme levels. This emphasised the notion of continuous learning from experience and the desirability of revising objectives, targets and strategies at the different levels. Despite uneven results, it was felt that the value of the approach had been proved, but a number of problems did emerge. There were great variations among projects in understanding what self-evaluation meant, in the commitment to implementing it, and in the personnel to carry it out (Commins et al., 1994). In many contexts there was little experience or culture of evaluation in social interventions. The linkages between project and programme evaluation were problematic; for instance, information derived from project self-evaluation tended to be preserved inside the project and not readily shared for programme evaluation (Conroy, 1994: 15).

If self-evaluation is to work from the point of view of providing adequate and reliable data for programme evaluation, an important issue is the role and status of the evaluator vis-à-vis the project committee and management, on the one hand, and the rest of the programme on the other (Commins, 1994: 20). In Poverty 3 the main deficits were in overall programme evaluation. This was to some extent attributable to a lack of appreciation at the planning stage of the resources required for this purpose.

It was important that Poverty 3 functioned cohesively across its different levels as a pilot demonstration programme and not simply as a collection of projects assisted by EU funding. The programme's design therefore required a complex structure of organisation and management to deal with the political and strategic

orientation, as well as with the operational and administrative dimensions. Generally, the programme proved adequate and workable in practice. Inevitably, several difficulties had to be overcome, arising from (i) the structures of the programme and the roles assigned to the various actors, (ii) the regulations of the Community and its functioning procedures, and (iii) those difficulties resulting from inadequacies in the operating teams themselves (Abou Sada et al., 1994: 11). Some examples illustrate these points. The first contractual period of seven months - the 'definition phase' - proved too short to give projects sufficient time to become operational on a satisfactory basis. The phasing, standardised budgeting and project expenditure rules dictated by Community regulations did not always fit well with the momentum of action at the local level. Despite the concern to decentralise responsibility, it became clear that a certain minimum number of initiatives would have to be orchestrated at the central level in order to maintain internal cohesion. At the local level, a number of projects faced difficulties in securing co-funding, and inadequacies emerged in staff competencies. At a late stage in the programme, special training was made available for project staff while most other problems were dealt with by direct contact between projects and RDUs (or the Central Unit), and by seminars or workshops.

Conclusion

The primary objective of the Poverty 3 programme was not to achieve the integration of the largest possible number of excluded people but to promote new organisational models and preventive measures for combating exclusion. In this respect, it had an impact commensurate with the scale of its resources. Its capacity to mobilise relatively large numbers of agencies and people was one of its main strengths during a time of discontent and even disenchantment with social affairs (Conroy, 1994).

It contributed significantly to the widening of the debate on social exclusion and helped the Community to give a strong political signal that social exclusion is on the policy agenda. While there is a consensus that all citizens should have a guarantee of a basic level of resources, there is a growing realisation that social policies will now have to take on the more ambitious objective of helping people find a place in society - other than through conventional employment policies (see Commission of the European Communities, 1993: 21).

The programme demonstrated the value of an integrated approach at the local level based on multi-dimensional action, institutional partnerships and the participation of those most directly affected. Some of the local projects will become part of the continuing work of national or local administrations. In a large number of cases, specific actions will be continued. Most of the Innovative Initiatives will continue to function within the non-governmental sector (Conroy, 1994: 21).

However, the ultimate impact of programmes such as Poverty 3 will not depend entirely on the demonstrations of their efficacy. First, there are new or more intensified challenges facing Europe: the ageing of the population, new trends in immigration, changes in traditional family solidarity, new technologies, global competition and the enlargement of the Community. European social policy is entering a critical phase (Commission of the European Communities, 1993: 6).

Second, Poverty 3 has been part of a more comprehensive search for new orientations in the social policies of the European Union. This search is reflected in expanded structures for dialogue and for the development of consensus, in the widening of the scope of Community instruments (such as the European Social Fund), and particularly in the Social Agreement of the Treaty of European Union. But progress has not been without its difficulties, given the limited powers of the Union, the need to adhere to the principle of subsidiarity, and the different socio-political circumstances in European countries.

In this last respect, Member States differ in the way ideologies and policy perspectives shape social budgets, systems of social protection and mechanisms of social intervention. Nevertheless, as the 1993 Green Paper (Commission of the European Communities, 1993: 12) points out, the Community's fundamental objective remains constant: the advancement of economic and social progress as two sides of the same coin and the search to ensure that the process of integration is clearly identified in the minds of the population as bringing incremental improvement in social and living standards in its wake.

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