



Background note

EUROCITIES Social Affairs Forum “Cities promoting inclusive labour market”

Bruxelles, 20-21 October 2015

Introduction

As highlighted in the **EUROCITIES position on the development of an EU urban Agenda**, cities are drivers of quality jobs and sustainable growth: cities are major employers, procurers, social service providers, regulators and investors, with a strong role to play in supporting SMEs and entrepreneurs, and brokering new partnerships.

However, the **employment situation in Europe remains critical**. The challenges are well documented: low levels of growth and job creation and a mismatch of skills with labour market needs; high youth unemployment and a growing number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET); rising numbers of long-term unemployed and early school leavers and persisting barriers to labour market access for many groups. Even where employment is increasing, many people find themselves without adequate resources to live. Inequalities and poverty, including in-work poverty, are on the rise.

In the **EUROCITIES Declaration on Work** we make it clear that in order to tackle effectively the challenge of work in Europe and achieve long term sustainable solutions there is the need to adopt a holistic approach.

European cities are committed to providing integrated and quality social services to people to ensure their active inclusion into the labour market and society and to foster social cohesion. They are front-line providers of social schemes and coordinate projects between diverse organisations at local level. This contributes to the overall objectives of the European Commission Social Investment Package to prioritise social investment and to modernise welfare systems and in particular to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of social intervention through affordable and quality public services.¹

In March 2015 the Social and Employment Council² defined and highlighted the importance of **inclusive labour market measures** including schemes and public interventions that aim to increase the employability and participation of people that are far from the labour market. These people can be in disadvantaged situations, risk being discriminated against, and face specific barriers when accessing the labour market.

As noted by the OECD³, the most effective initiatives for tackling long-term unemployment and labour market exclusion are rooted within their communities and have an advanced understanding of local conditions and the local labour market that is why there is the need to recognise the role that cities play in developing the inclusive labour market landscape.

¹ European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, 'Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion - including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020', 20 February 2013, COM(2013), available at: <http://goo.gl/PN85Pi>

² Draft Council Conclusions 6182/15 'Moving towards more inclusive labour markets', March 2015

³ OECD - LEED Report: Tackling long-term unemployment amongst vulnerable groups, June 2013



Objectives of the meeting

The objective of this Social Affairs Forum meeting is to discuss what role and resources cities have to promote more inclusive labour markets in their territories. More specifically, the meeting will:

- provide an informal platform for local politicians to talk about local challenges and potential responses to them;
- explore the topic of inclusive labour markets and interrelation between different dimensions of this issues (i.e. from creation of job opportunities to activation measures);
- show examples of effective coordination of local services and partnerships with other actors at national, regional and local level to tackle the issue of labour market exclusion;
- explore the potential of EU resources to address the challenges deriving from increasing unemployment, schools drop out and in work poverty;
- exchange knowledge and experience on challenges in this field in other European cities and an opportunity to learn about projects and activities in other cities;
- provide opportunities to discuss potential collaborations and projects between cities;
- share the latest EU and EURO CITIES developments, including the continued implementation of forum priorities in 2015.

Expected results

Through a mix of presentations, panel debates, workshops, speed networking sessions and a political side event, the SAF meeting will inspire and engage members in talking about measures promoting inclusive labour market and assemble a set of key messages for cities and European policy-makers alike to take forward, with particular attention to the forthcoming high level roundtable to be held in early 2016 focused on the role of cities in boosting employment.