



EUROCITIES STATEMENT ON THE SOCIAL INVESTMENT PACKAGE

The Social Investment Package (SIP) recommendations offer strategic guidance to member states on improving the effectiveness, efficiency and adequacy of social policies. They should also help achieve the Europe 2020 objective of lifting 20 million people out of poverty.

Currently, the SIP does not fully acknowledge the crucial role played by local governments in developing and delivering effective social policies. We believe that without the support and involvement of city authorities, which are responsible for social inclusion on the ground, the SIP will fail to achieve its aim of efficient, effective and sustainable social systems.

Indeed the SIP implementation will only be successful through strong multi-level partnership, involving cities directly, and improved coordination. We need a system where all the stakeholders, such as city authorities, NGOs, social partners, and service users, work together to plan, design, manage, monitor and evaluate social policies.

Our recommendations address this and seek to ensure that the SIP will tackle social exclusion, rising poverty and increasing unemployment, especially amongst the young and the most vulnerable people in Europe – problems that are undoubtedly concentrated in cities.

1. Strengthen partnership working between city authorities at regional, national and European levels to ensure that the SIP recommendations are put into practice

City authorities are essential stakeholders as they are responsible for designing and delivering social inclusion and welfare measures to a majority of Europe's citizens. Their role as front-line providers of services and social policies needs to be acknowledged and explicitly mentioned in the SIP.

City authorities are often responsible for early childhood education, health care, housing and other public interventions to combat poverty and social exclusion. They are already implementing some of the SIP's recommendations, such as one-stop-shops, early-childhood care, integrated approaches, active inclusion, and can also contribute to testing innovative policies, identifying and transferring good practices.

European guidelines for working in partnership with city authorities in preparing the National Reform Programmes and implementing the SIP would help to improve service coordination and impact. The European institutions should monitor the effective engagement of local authorities through the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, the European Semester and the Country Specific Recommendations.

2. Fully involve cities in EU peer reviews with member states and organise study visits in cities.

We believe that specific mutual learning activities funded by the European Commission, such as peer-reviews and study visits, should take place with the full involvement of city authorities on

topics such as one-stop shops, positive activation, integrated services, working with NGOs supporting the social economy and social innovation. Involving all relevant levels of government - national, regional and local - in mutual learning activities will ensure that obstacles and bottlenecks can be removed and that successful local-level pilot projects can be mainstreamed.

3. Improving data collection and policy analysis to include the city level

The SIP provides comprehensive information on social trends at Europe, but critically it fails to uncover the real state of affairs at city level, where most people are living.

The data used is based on national or regional statistics but this aggregate information does not sufficiently illustrate the local level challenges, the pockets of deprivation in cities and the different needs between the city, regional and national levels.

We encourage the European institutions to collect information from cities on social trends to assess and evaluate social inclusion policies. In addition, evidence of what works and what does not work should be collected at the local level to ensure that implemented measures are both efficient and effective in meeting the social policy objectives.

4. Allocating adequate resources to the implementation of the SIP at local level

The SIP should fully clarify how EU funds, in particular the ESF and the Programme for Social Change and Innovation (PSCI), will be used for its implementation. City authorities will need to have access to adequate resources to address and implement the measures suggested by the SIP. In particular, EU funds should support the implementation of SIP recommendations at local level, according to local needs.

5. Ensuring that nobody is left behind

The main SIP recommendations aim to develop human capital such as education, early-childhood care and skills development, to prevent and deal with life-cycle risks and crises, such as unemployment, old age and illness, and to support active inclusion in society. These are key parts of a well-designed and effective welfare state. Effective investments in human capital throughout the life-cycle require substantial investments in the necessary infrastructure (e.g. early childhood care) and a comprehensive approach, especially for reaching those with multiple disadvantages. Consequently, the SIP should also reflect the importance of adequate social spending to protect and support those in need.

The idea of looking at social spending as a social investment is a step forward. However, it is also important to maintain social policies to ensure the participation in society of the most vulnerable people and those affected by multiple disadvantages. Conditional and temporary support schemes, as proposed in the SIP, only work as long as people have adequate opportunities to become independent of social support.

The implementation of the SIP should ensure that nobody is left behind in Europe. This is particularly important in a time of economic and financial crisis when, in many places, social spending is being cut, despite rising levels of poverty and social exclusion.

Safeguarding and developing adequate social inclusion policies is necessary to maintain social cohesion and the European social model as well as to restore public trust both in government and in Europe.