

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions



# Subsidiarity Monitoring Net- work

# Action Plan 2010

## Summary

The Subsidiarity Monitoring Network's Action Plan was launched in June 2009 by the CoR President and First Vice President, as a follow-up to the 4<sup>th</sup> Subsidiarity Conference organised by the CoR and the Region of Lombardy in Milan.

The aim of the Action Plan is to **identify experiences and best practices in the application of the subsidiarity principle in Europe's regions and cities**. It complements the SMN's activities for a period of one year, analyses a range of EU policy domains in the light of subsidiarity and feeds into the CoR's consultative activities.

The Action Plan **encourages local and regional authorities to identify and exchange best practices** in implementing EU policy goals in accordance with the subsidiarity principle and multilevel governance, with particular regard to the involvement of civil society organisations.

The first Action Plan (2009/2010) was divided into pillars corresponding to policy areas where the application of the subsidiarity principle is perceived to be especially relevant and where examples of best practices exist at the level of local and regional authorities, namely:

- Fighting climate change;
- Health policy;
- Innovation;
- Integration of immigrants;
- Social policies and rights.

For each working group, specific partners (the "lead partners") agreed to take on key roles in the steering of the Action Plan, owing to their experience in applying the subsidiarity principle at grass-roots level and the expertise of the scientific and academic networks at their disposal.

**This document presents the key points of the final reports adopted by each of the working groups. The full reports are accessible on the SMN website ([www.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity](http://www.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity)).**

|   |
|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fighting climate change:<br/>Involving the public in sustainable energy solutions</b></p> |
|---|

## Key points

### 1. Background

The main ideas and targets necessary for fighting climate change have been gathered and agreed at international and EU levels, but they will become reality only if local and regional authorities also take them to heart and implement them. At the same time, the indispensable reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions through sustainable energy policy cannot be tackled by the local and regional levels alone. The political response must therefore be coordinated between all spheres of governance in order to achieve the best results at the level closest to the citizen.

The activities of the working group show that the principle of subsidiarity is not only a "defence mechanism" aimed at safeguarding the competences of the levels of governance closer to the citizens, but also a positive concept guiding the efficient exercise of shared competences within the EU and thus focusing on constructive synergies and solutions.

The working group's members highlight these synergies by their best practices, whilst demonstrating that ambitious climate goals cannot be achieved without the contribution of the local and regional levels: climate efforts must be supported by everyone. The relevant stakeholders including citizens, local and regional businesses and associations have to be convinced of the need for changes in the production and use of energy in order to reduce GHG emissions. Local and regional authorities work at the level closest to these actors and are thus in a privileged position to interact with them.

### 2. Group members and their best practices:

- **Regional Government of Vorarlberg, Austria** (*lead partner*)  
*Best practice: Energy future Vorarlberg*
- **Netwerk Stad Twente** (consisting of the municipalities of Enschede, Hengelo, Almelo, Borne and Oldenzaal), **represented by the municipality of Hengelo, Netherlands**  
*Best practice: Energy saving of minimum wage earners*
- **City of Gothenburg, Sweden**  
*Best practice: Travel coach project*
- **Municipality of Erlangen, Germany**  
*Best practice: Energy Alliance for efficiency and climate protection*
- **Regional Government of the Basque Country, Spain**  
*Best practice: Electric Vehicle*

### 3. Conclusions

The contribution which local and regional levels make to the achievement of EU climate protection goals is indispensable and the outcome of successful local and regional initiatives must be acknowledged and better utilised at EU level:

- The respect of the subsidiarity principle is particularly relevant in the fight against climate change. Since all levels of governance are involved, it has to be ensured that the relevant decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen by the most appropriate level, where the climate protection objectives can be most effectively achieved.
- EU initiatives must therefore leave the local and regional levels sufficient room for manoeuvre and flexibility to carry out their own efficient policies, complementing or even going beyond EU initiatives and therefore making a vital contribution to the success of the fight against climate change. In addition, the EU level should take existing local and regional activities into account when defining its objectives and initiatives.
- Not only the central level of the Member States, but also the local and regional levels, must be involved in shaping EU climate change and energy policy. The involvement of these levels in EU decision making, via the CoR's participation in this process, is thus essential.
- However, this must also be complemented by other kinds of effective and regular involvement by local and regional levels. For example, hearings with regional and local authorities on EU climate change and energy initiatives that have a direct impact on the regional and local level should be organised systematically by the relevant EU institutions. The results of every hearing should be comprehensibly taken into account by the decision-making institutions.
- Consultation of local and regional authorities in the pre-legislative phase of the EU-decision making process is vital: the EU level should assess the potential impact of its initiatives on the local and regional level systematically. Efficient involvement of these levels in the European Commission's Impact Assessments is thus essential. This can be achieved, inter alia, via the CoR's Subsidiarity Monitoring Network, which can contribute to Impact Assessments after having consulted its partners and other relevant local and regional stakeholders.
- Climate change and energy policy are part of the EU 2020 Strategy. They should also be among the main thematic priorities of EU Cohesion and Structural Funding Policy after 2013. Resources should be focused on a limited number of priorities.
- The EU must acknowledge the importance of the strategies and processes for changing public behaviour, which have been introduced and conducted successfully by local and regional authorities. Without these activities, the EU could not fulfil its ambitious climate protection targets. Accordingly, processes for involving local and regional authorities in climate protection issues should be fostered, either through an existing EU funding programme or through a new EU programme set up specifically for this purpose.
- With respect to climate protection and energy matters, the EU should step up its efforts to foster transnational networks and associations of local and regional authorities, such as the Covenant of Mayors. Such forms of enhanced cooperation give local and regional authorities the opportunity to set objectives which go beyond those set at national or EU level, thus helping to take the fight against climate change to deeper levels.

## Health Inequalities

### Key Points

#### 1. Background

The working group on health inequalities endeavoured to assess the best ways to tackle this issue across Europe. In 2009, the Committee of the Regions participated in the assessment of the territorial impact of the European Commission's proposal "Solidarity in Health". Subsequently, the CoR issued its own opinion on this matter, with Mr Dave Wilcox (UK/PES) as rapporteur. The working group took stock of all this and aimed to analyse the problem of health inequalities in terms of subsidiarity by presenting a range of best practices and proposing policy recommendations.

Subsidiarity – particularly horizontal subsidiarity – is crucial when it comes to addressing health inequalities. This is a policy field where subsidiarity can be clearly geared towards solidarity. The field of health inequalities is also one where the stewardship model, also rooted in the idea of service or help, has been shown to be very useful. Stewardship could be used as an underpinning for subsidiarity to ensure that responsibilities are allocated appropriately and properly in the name of solidarity.

#### 2. Group members and their best practices:

The working group was led by Lombardy Region (Italy) and included the Valencia Region (Spain), the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (Finland) and Västra Götaland Region (Sweden). Each member presented an example of best practice in the field of health inequalities:

- Lombardy Region: ROL (*Rete Oncologica Lombarda*)
- Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities: Better Health in Northern Finland sub-project in the region of Kainuu
- Valencia Region: Health Action Plan
- Västra Götaland Region: *Marmot Commission* Review and Angereds Hospital

#### 3. Conclusions

Health Inequalities

- A. are to be found between as well as within Member States,
- B. can be reduced if the (political) will is right,
- C. may be reduced by initiatives on various levels, from the EU Commission through European Agencies to national, regional and Community levels - ending with the need to support family and individual motivation and commitment,

- D. may be reduced if there are even better incentives for preventing poor health and promoting a healthy lifestyle on an individual as well as on a family and community level.

*Initiatives to be undertaken*

- A. Possibilities at EU level include:
- common measurements, analyses, reports and benchmarking activities;
  - knowledge gained through research;
  - exchange of knowledge and best practices through publications, conferences and projects and by supporting networks;
  - funding and follow-up of the above-mentioned initiatives.
- B. at national level much can be achieved when it comes to taking an active part in EU initiatives, such as those indicated above, as well as tailoring such initiatives to fit national needs, preferences and cultures
- C. at regional level, even closer to the public and often with access to quite strong governmental powers and useful resources, initiatives such as those above may be put into practice, progress followed, data collected and the experiences drawn shared with other regions (as in most of the projects described here).
- D. at EU level, where the key needs of population groups can best be recognised and evaluated, initiatives focusing on supporting reductions in health inequalities may be integrated and translated into best practice on the ground (as for example in the Angereds Community Hospital initiative in the Västra Götaland Region of Sweden).
- E. “learning by doing”, together with others, is an efficient and stimulating way of making progress. In today's Europe, we have the exciting and rewarding possibility of being able to work on a common problem, adding different views and contributing various experiences. Working as part of the working group “Health inequalities” within the SMN Action Plan has been a tremendous learning experience, well suited for replication in the health field and in many other areas.

*Political recommendations to the Committee of Regions*

In our view the CoR could, among other things:

- Help raise awareness of the subsidiarity principle, both in its vertical and horizontal dimensions, amongst the general public and the regions within the EU.
- Ask other European and international institutions to export this concept in the health sector as well, with particular attention to the WHO, where the right relationship between subsidiarity and stewardship in health care should be explored.

## Social Innovation

### Key points

#### 1. Background

The working group on social innovation was led by the Basque Country and focused on the study of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Today, and in accordance with the terms of Communication COM (2006) 136, entitled *Implementing the partnership for growth and jobs: Making Europe a pole of excellence on corporate social responsibility* that deals with this matter, the Commission considers CSR to be an aspect of the European social model, which is a means to defend solidarity, cohesion and equality of opportunity within the context of more intense international competition. The declared objective is to convert the EU into a "pole of excellence" in matters regarding social responsibility and to ensure that the policies it applies and European companies really contribute to social development.

In its subsidiarity analysis, the working group considers that regions are best placed to foster and implement the objectives set by the EU. Moreover, the members of the working group believe that it is necessary to establish cooperation mechanisms between the different agents involved in implementing CSR within the same region, and to apply horizontal subsidiarity effectively.

#### 2. Group members and their best practices:

The working group was led by the Basque country and included the Flanders Region (Belgium), Wielkopolska Region (Poland) and Veneto Region (Italy). The following best practices were presented by members of the working group:

- Flanders: Sustainable Urban Development; Plan C: enhancing sustainable material management and Flanders in Action.
- Wielkopolska: Wielkopolska as a CSR leader; Social Image of Modern Companies – promotion of corporate social responsibility in Wielkopolska; Equal "Social Economy in practice".
- Basque Country: Izaite (association of Basque Companies for sustainability); Xertatu (the most advanced institutional initiative led by the public sector in the Basque Country); FIARE (acronym for "*Fundación Inversión y Ahorro Responsable*", was set up to promote socially responsible savings and investment among both private individuals and institutions).

### 3. Conclusions

The working group proposes that a new, innovative and participative model of European governance should be fostered, that takes into consideration the transversal effect of CSR in the performance of EU policies and allows the coordination or fostering of actions at a number of different levels, taking into account the subsidiarity principle.

CSR is a far-reaching concept that encompasses many areas of activity and can be seen in a wide range of actions in different countries of the EU.

In particular, the working group proposes:

- Fostering regional cooperation and the effective implementation of the Alliance for CSR and its three main points:
  - Increasing the awareness of CSR
  - Integrating CSR and developing open coalitions of cooperation
  - Providing a favourable environment for CSR
- Increasing resources for social innovation, in order to promote networking and public-private collaboration, develop common methodologies for assessing the initiatives and their impact, and create new infrastructures capable of supporting social innovation.<sup>1</sup>
- Drawing up and using systems of global indicators that facilitate monitoring of the progress being made in quality of life, innovation and sustainability in Europe and that integrate economic indicators, social cohesion and efficiency in the use, production and management of resources.
- Recovering the values of the European social model and disseminating them at all levels of the Union.
- Introducing new organisational models based on people taking advantage of all their creativity and relational capabilities, which companies can use to improve their competitiveness and develop their innovative capacity.
- Fostering social innovation and research into CSR and its development in order to generate a body of knowledge whose results can be mined and used for the benefit of society.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Innovation Union. Working document. SEC(1161) final



## Integration of immigrants in urban areas

### Key points

#### 1. Background

Regardless of one's outlook on the subject matter, the integration of immigrants is an issue which requires political attention and action, primarily at the local level. However, it cannot be denied that local responses also require institutional coordination and support at the national and European levels. In the spirit of the subsidiarity principle and applying the notions of multilevel governance, it can be argued that optimal results at the level closest to the citizen cannot be achieved without the involvement of actors at the national and European levels, each within their own respective spheres of competence.

The principle of subsidiarity is all the more relevant here in that the EU is now equipped with an explicit legal basis for assuming a role in supporting and encouraging efforts to promote the integration of legal migrants, excluding any harmonisation of national laws and regulations. Various actions have been undertaken at European level, most recently within the framework of the Action Plan Implementing the Stockholm Programme. The European Commission is now preparing a Second European Agenda for integration, to which the CoR is contributing through a consultation.

The purpose of the working group on "Integration of Immigrants in Urban Areas" organised within the framework of the 1<sup>st</sup> Action Plan of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network (SMN) was to foster a dialogue between the group's participants on the best ways to implement integration policies at the local, and especially urban, level. The goal of this dialogue was to identify and present best practices of local (especially urban) and regional policies in the integration of immigrants and thus to highlight the indispensable contribution of these levels to this goal.

#### 2. Group Members and their best practices

The Working Group was led by the Catalan Parliament (Spain) and included the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (Finland) and the Municipality of Patras (Greece). The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) participated in the launch meeting on 28 May 2010 and remained informed of progress throughout the process.

Best practices were presented along the following themes:

- **Proactive local registration policy:** Catalonia
- **Reception services:** NEO Project in Helsinki, Multilingual information and guidance services for immigrants in Tampere, Catalonia
- **Intercultural skills:** "People Acting Towards Respect and Solidarity", Patras
- **Access to work:** Helsinki, Catalonia
- **Strategic planning:** National Agreement on Immigration, Catalonia

### 3. Conclusions and recommendations

The following topics and recommendations were identified:

- **Decision-making process:** Participation of stakeholders, particularly civil society organisations, and governance are the keys to success in the planning, development and promotion stages. Frequently, stakeholders are in the front line of social and welfare intervention. This strategic position builds specific knowledge which is becoming essential to policymaking.
- **Institutional and structural framework:** Strategic planning is absolutely necessary to manage all public policies, especially integration policies that need to be implemented with a sustainable long-term perspective. Furthermore, integration policies need long-term institutional structures to support short-, mid- and long-term policies.
- **Data collection:** The CoR must stimulate surveys and comparative research on various aspects of immigration, with a focus on assessing public administrations. In particular:
  - The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) should provide information from local and regional authorities;
  - Local and regional authorities should agree on basic data to provide to MIPEX;
  - Proactive registration services should provide full data on the real population.
- **Reception and integration:** Integration of immigrants requires political attention and action from the very beginning of the immigration project. Integration should be seen as a two-directional, dynamic and continual process between the different peoples residing in a territory. As a first step in this process, reception services (including language training and introductory courses on the host society and work) need to be developed to ensure immigrants' autonomy. In addition, although there are many, varied keys to integration, the goal has to be social cohesion and the collective construction of a shared society, through promoting equal opportunities to access public services and participate in all levels of politics or through the recognition of diversity.
- **Funding of initiatives:** Integration policies need to be budgeted for in the short-, medium- and long-term.

In the context of the preparation of the European Commission's Communication on a Second EU Agenda for Integration, it could be interesting to pursue the work on one of the indicative areas proposed for the European Integration Modules, i.e. (i) introductory and language courses, (ii) strong commitment by the host society and (iii) active participation of immigrants in all aspects of collective life.

## The fight against poverty and social exclusion

### Key points

#### 1. Background

Beyond economic deprivation, poverty encompasses the lack or difficulty of access to employment, education, basic healthcare, housing and other social services, as well as social participation. In all these areas, services are mainly organised and provided by local and regional authorities, which are therefore at the forefront of the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The causes of poverty cannot however be tackled solely at local and regional levels. In the spirit of the principle of subsidiarity and applying the notions of multi-level governance, the political response must be co-ordinated between all spheres of competence to achieve the best results at the level closest to the citizen.

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, social policy remains largely in the hands of Member States, but combating social exclusion and discrimination has now become one of the objectives of the EU. Moreover, the EU is to integrate a social dimension into the definition and implementation of all its policies, taking particular account of requirements linked to the fight against social exclusion. Furthermore, it now has the legal basis for actions leading to the strengthening of the Union's economic, social and territorial cohesion.

By focusing on the various complementary spheres of governance involved, the working group shed particular light on the coordination and articulation between activities and regulation at local and regional levels and the EU policy framework, thus illustrating a positive approach to the subsidiarity principle. This is all the more relevant in this policy field, in that the EU's mode of action, the "Open Method of Coordination" (OMC), is rather flexible and decentralised (see below).

#### 2. Group members and their best practices

- **Arco Latino (Lead partner)**
  - *Provincia di Alessandria* (IT) – Zone planning at sub-municipal level: "*concertation Clinique*"
  - *Provincia di Napoli* (IT) – First conclusions of the study on measures in Arco Latino authorities
  - *Provincia di Salerno* (IT) – Centres for women's employment
  - *Provincia della Spezia* (IT) – STARTER project: Support and promotion of entrepreneurship (SME); PROVINTEGRA project: social integration of unemployed migrants
  - *Diputación de Barcelona* (ES) – Adapted housing for vulnerable elderly people; Methodological guides for local social integration plans

- *Diputación de Tarragona* (ES) – Savings funds for social inclusion, with a stress on the disabled
- *Conseil général de l'Hérault* (FR) – Aging well and intergenerational relations
- *Members of Arco Latino* – JAMO project: mobility for disadvantaged youth
- **Veneto Region (Italy)** – Assistance to families: micro-solidarity networks
- **Wielkopolska Region (Poland)** - Assistance to families in crisis situations
- **Union of Cyprus Municipalities (Cyprus)** – The Open School of the Municipality of Strovolos; the Multifunctional Foundation of the Municipality of Strovolos

### 3. Conclusions and recommendations

- To ensure social cohesion and inclusion, it is strategic to favour the widest possible interaction between local and regional authorities, civil society and the private sector, in an approach of horizontal subsidiarity.
- A major added value of EU action lies in the promotion of participative, compulsory and measurable coordination of the Member States (MS) with their sub-national authorities.
- The EU should reinforce and rationalise its financial programmes and tools for promoting pilot initiatives directed towards sub-national governments and social inclusion themes. Partners welcome the launch of the Innovation Union which opens FP7 to strategic themes and actors.
- Training for the users of pilot project funding should be seriously considered.
- The EU and the MS, as well as local and regional authorities, should reinforce the role of the CoR, particularly in the monitoring of subsidiarity and the EU 2020 Strategy.
- It is necessary to develop the social OMC through sound, active and regular participation of local and regional authorities. Local and regional authorities should be involved in the development of territorial pacts.
- The EU and its MS should promote multilevel inter-institutional agreements for programming social policies.
- A balance should be ensured between local and regional competences and the resources available for their implementation.
- The EU should increase and rationalise resources and measures addressed to local authorities, and involve them more in the definition of policies.
- It is essential that the EU develop the flagship initiative on the Platform against poverty and social exclusion by taking account of the role, capacities and potentialities of local and regional authorities.
- It is necessary that the European Commission support the Territorial Pacts initiative promoted by the CoR, by allocating appropriate resources for its implementation.
- It is important to keep territorial cohesion, as a cross-cutting perspective, within EU key priorities and regional policy, as these approaches and mechanisms provide local and regional authorities with the greatest possibilities for improving their actions within their territories.

**For further information please contact:**

Unit for Networks and Subsidiarity

[subsidiarity@cor.europa.eu](mailto:subsidiarity@cor.europa.eu)  
[www.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity](http://www.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity)



EUROPEAN UNION



**Committee of the Regions**