



Urban Agenda Partnership on Urban Poverty

Report of the seminar on 27 September 2016 in Athens, Greece

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Koningin Julianaplein 10 | 2595 AA The Hague | Netherlands
P.O. Box 30833 | 2500 GV The Hague | Netherlands

www.eukn.eu
info@eukn.eu



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1 Introduction

The partnership on urban poverty, one of the four pilot partnerships established within the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU, brings together representatives from cities (Lille (FR), Kortrijk (BE), Birmingham (UK), Łódź (PL), Timișoara (RO), Daugavpils (LV), Bruxelles-Capital (BE), Île-de-France (FR)), member states (the French Commissariat Général à l'Égalité des Territoires (CGET) and the Belgium PPS Social Integration as coordinators plus Germany, Spain, and Greece), the European Commission (DG REGIO and DG EMPL), and organisations representing knowledge networks or civil society (URBACT, EUKN, EAPN, UN Habitat, FEANTSA, and Eurochild).

The partnership has decided to focus on two main areas in relation to the main topic, namely:

- Urban poverty considered within the perspective of an area-based approach, i.e. urban poverty as a spatial phenomenon manifesting itself in specific urban areas, in particular deprived urban neighbourhoods;
- Urban poverty considered within the perspective of a people-based approach, in particular focusing on child poverty.

It is the ambition of the partnership to integrate these two approaches. Thematic linkages with other partnerships will also be explored, in particular with the partnership dealing with the inclusion of migrants and refugees and the partnership on housing.

Like the other Urban Agenda partnerships, the partnership on urban poverty takes into account the EU focus on better regulation, better funding, and better knowledge. This means answers are required as to how to improve EU legislation so that it better reflects urban needs practices and responsibilities, how to ensure better access to and utilisation of European funds by urban areas, and how to improve the EU urban knowledge base and stimulate the sharing of best practices and cooperation.

The two external experts advising the partnership, Ms Laura Colini and Mr Iván Tosics, have provided their input by presenting a first draft of the scoping paper, which was discussed at the partnership meeting seminar in Athens. The seminar took the scoping paper as a point of departure and sought to provide a critical reflection on the main topics via interactive workshops. The discussions in and feedback from the workshop generated input for the next phase of the partnership: the definition of the objectives and deliverables, which constitute the core of the partnership's action plan.



2 Seminar contents

The full-day seminar on 27 September 2016, following the partnership meeting the day before, brought together external speakers, partnership participants, and stakeholders to discuss various aspects of urban poverty and its implications for the partnership's further proceedings.

2.1 Opening session

The seminar started off with welcome addresses from **Ms Maria Stratigaki**, Deputy Mayor of Athens on Social Inclusion, and **Mr Mart Grisel**, Director of the EUKN, who was the chair of the day. Ms Stratigaki mentioned the importance of the work of the partnership and that urban poverty in Athens, unfortunately, was one of the most pressing contemporary issues.

Mr Eric Briat, Deputy Director for urban and social cohesion at the CGET, opened the event. He described CGET's tasks concerning urban matters, such as implementing the new urban policy that has been launched in 2014 and managing the elaboration of city contracts and the application of policies within the scope of ordinary legislation in order to fight against urban poverty. He highlighted the focus of France to invest particularly in the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods, which is why France became one of the coordinators of the urban poverty partnership.

Mr Briat said that the growth of poverty, especially in many European towns and cities, creates a form of social relegation and segregation, which complicates the search for solutions. He cited the draft of the scoping paper pointing out that there was a "systemic mechanism of the 'making poverty' through socio-economic inequalities" (p. 5). He described some of the mechanisms like cumulating states of deprivation many people face (low income, unemployment, a difficult access to health and public services, etc.) and the socio-spatial consequences of impoverishment creating disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Mr Briat described the French policy targeting deprived neighbourhoods and the most recent changes in methods for identifying urban poverty. Since 2014, so-called Priority Neighbourhoods are defined using a method based on concentration of income poverty, i.e. where more than 50% of the population live below the threshold of poverty (60% of the average income). There are 1,500 of them, representing 5.5 million inhabitants. This new method for defining the priority geography has identified neighbourhoods with problems not only in the suburban large-scale housing blocks, but also in city centres.

Concerning possible **solutions**, Mr Briat emphasised the need for a multidimensional approach to the fight against poverty and its spatial concentration in deprived neighbourhoods, which must be based on an improved understanding of the needs and difficulties felt by the people. This, in turn, would enable the designing of adequate strategies at the local, the national, and the European level. He highlighted the crucial importance of joint actions, based on and provided by multi-level governance, involving the cities, the member states and the Commission. In addition, he emphasised that actions were needed at the level of the whole city to reduce the socio-economic gaps to implement targeted interventions in the most deprived areas. These interventions should be based upon three key pillars to be integrated when put into action: the social pillar, including education, culture, sport, health and



participation in NGOs; the economic pillar, supporting value creation and employment; and the urban regeneration pillar, improving housing, transport and the living environment. Mr Briat concluded that the actions would not be fully efficient if they were not paired with the involvement and empowerment of people in poverty.

Mr Philippe De Coene, Deputy Mayor of Kortrijk responsible for social affairs, delivered a powerful presentation about the city of Kortrijk's local anti-poverty policy. The starting point for this policy was a contradiction that came across quite bluntly to the local Council and administration: Kortrijk is a prosperous city of around 75,000 inhabitants in a wealthy region, but a staggering 11,227 persons are living in poverty, roughly 15% of the population. Other challenges are the ageing population, the increase of the working poor and households with a vulnerable profile (single parent families, elderly, people with a migration background, isolated people, and young people). This contradiction triggered real concern. But instead of hiding this reality, the Council decided to go public and share this reality with all its citizens, making the fight against poverty a mission for each and everyone in the community. 11,227 became a headline communication anchor used to mobilise the population.

Mr De Coene insisted that any positive evolution was based on three conditions under the acronym of "CIA" standing for Commitment, Investment, and Action & New Ideas. Commitment refers to making the fight against poverty a main political topic at the local level, stating that localities have more credibility on this matter than higher levels of government. Mr De Coene highlighted that adequate financial resources were key: a local budget of over €33 million for the 2014-2019 period showed that fighting poverty required important investments. He called this a reminder of the very diverse realities and resources that local municipalities – across one country and across the EU – possess when being confronted with the challenges of the fight against poverty. According to Mr De Coene, if commitment and finance are prerequisites, then daring to launch new projects, to provide services differently, and to work in new ways is also central to fighting poverty because "business as usual" is not delivering the expected results, i.e. poverty is not decreasing.

Mr De Coene stressed that key to the policies developed in Kortrijk were the participative processes that the municipality has put in place to ensure that citizens have a voice at every step of the way from priority setting to policy design and implementation true to the motto "Let's give the city back to its citizens and appeal to their sense of responsibility". Co-decision activities led citizens to select poverty reduction as their number 3 priority on the local political agenda. Through a process of co-creation citizens and other relevant partners drew up a set of "people-generated actions" that were included in the plan to reduce poverty. Following this preparatory phase, a wide range of organisations, local actors, citizens, and companies joined in to implement the Council's strategy.

Mr De Coene's presentation ended with a note on communication and Kortrijk's efforts in providing citizens with attractive, simple and useful information about tackling poverty on a daily basis. The Council's desire to speak out about poverty has led to the publication of *Sien*, a "glossy magazine for people with no glossy life", a magazine published four times a year that gives tips and tricks in all areas of life including fashion, make-up, practical tips, cooking, or interior decoration. The publication is entirely free and has the clear objective of creating a sense of pride and dignity for people who live with less.



Kortrijk's 10 **recommendations** to fight poverty at the local level are:

1. Make poverty reduction a high-priority policy area on the local level
2. Transcend the borders of traditional 'welfare'
3. Intervene in all other policy areas
4. You need money, coordination is not enough
5. Make your citizens co-owners
6. Involve all stakeholders from the first step
7. The user is your starting point, not your administration
8. Keep the spirit alive. Keep it on the agenda. Keep communicating
9. Be flexible. Stay flexible
10. Take into account local realities + regional, national and European programmes

Lastly, the external experts commissioned to provide the partnership with scientific input, **Ms Laura Colini** (researcher and URBACT lead expert) and **Mr Iván Tosics** (researcher at the Metropolitan Research Institute, and also URBACT lead expert), presented their draft of the scoping paper to the partnership. This document provides an overview of the topic by identifying key issues, analysing policy approaches, and discussing specific problems and options for an EU approach to combat urban poverty within the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU. With the scoping paper, the partnership is currently entering the second stage of managing the preparatory actions whereby the bottlenecks and potentials of the issues at stake are identified.



2.2 Thematic workshops

The core of the seminar was the exchange taking place within four thematic workshops. The discussions, outcomes, and suggestions arising from the workshop sessions are described in the following sections in further detail. They are supposed to provide critical and constructive feedback to the partnership and to the two experts commissioned to draft the scoping paper. Most importantly, they will inform the partnership's work on an action plan.

The thematic workshops were held in two slots, one during the morning (11:00-12:30) and one during the afternoon (13:30-15:00). The first slot served as a forum for linking the **scoping paper** draft with the workshop topic by defining key **messages** emerging from the scoping paper, useful aspects it provided, and elements that were still **missing** in the scoping paper. During the afternoon session, participants were using the terminology of a speedboat trying to reach its destination, they developed key **objectives** (islands) and main **hindrances** (anchors) concerning the further development of the discussed workshop topic.

The four workshop topics were:

- Identification of Urban Poverty
- Poverty, Welfare and the Labour Market
- Poverty and Public Services
- Child Poverty

The working groups' composition changed between the slots in order to receive as encompassing input as possible from a variety of stakeholders. Each workshop was attended by around ten persons per slot, enabling an intense debate and responsive, interactive working atmosphere.

2.2.1 Workshop 1: Identification of Urban Poverty

General aim

The workshop's aim was to discuss the aspects of the Scoping Paper relevant for the identification of poverty and to formulate concrete actions to be included in the action plan.

Speakers

Ms Valérie Darriau from the French National Observatory of Deprived Neighbourhoods (ONPV) presented the new priority neighbourhoods of the national urban policy. Subsequently, Ms Auriane Renaud from the French national institute of statistics and economic studies (INSEE) presented the database developed by INSEE to analyse poverty. She also introduced tax and welfare benefits data combined by the Filosofi platform.



Morning session

According to Ms Darriau, the sole criterion used to identify 1,500 priority neighbourhoods in France is now the income of the inhabitants. ONPV has developed a system of grids to identify the level of income in each neighbourhood. Some more factors such as social aids, educational success of the population, and children in deprived neighbourhoods were also presented to compare the situation of priority neighbourhoods with the rest of the urban area when identifying urban poverty.

Ms Renaud's presentation showed that INSEE also took the income level into account in developing a grid to identify the median income of a neighbourhood, from the poorest (deprived neighbourhood) to the richest (city centre) and the commuting area. The inter-decile ratio was used to measure the segregation and the number of poor people. The institute also works on residential migration and analyses if deprived neighbourhoods are poverty traps or short-term solutions from where people move out.

The moderator of the workshop, Ms Valérie Lapenne, presented the three foci to have in mind during the session related to the scoping paper: key messages, useful content and tools, and missing elements. Fifteen minutes of reflection in pairs yielded a number of ideas, which were collected on a flip chart. The main points identified as **key messages** emerging from the scoping paper were:

1. The need for the partnership to propose comparable data on urban poverty, including a cooperation with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) to gain centralised observation data;
2. The discussion of the AROPE indicator, leading to the proposal to ask Eurostat for AROPE data on neighbourhood level in order to include these data in the Urban Audit or Censuses.

Concerning **useful contents** of the scoping paper, participants stressed the methodology and that it was focused on local communities. It was critically remarked that the scoping paper's chapter 1 was helpful as a background document, but not necessarily in such a scoping note. Concerning **missing elements**, the need for data at the intra-neighbourhood and on the informal economy was stressed. Also, participants thought the demand for cities and member states to provide financial data to measure urban poverty should be part of the scoping paper. Further, it was suggested to take two to three elements from the mapping of EU policies and to include them in the scoping paper. It was criticised that the relationship between the AROPE indicator and the spatial approach at the neighbourhood level was insufficiently discussed. Also, the importance of creating a network of observatories with shared methodologies was highlighted. In more general terms, resilience and solidarity within families were mentioned as important aspects.

Afternoon session

A summary of the morning workshop shortly introduced the session to revoke the most important points discussed earlier, like EU policies tackling urban poverty and missing elements such as the resilience of cities when addressing poverty, intra-municipal level of measures, and the link between national observatories. Then, Ms Lapenne introduced the speedboat method, which was supposed to identify desirable outcomes and goals (islands) and obstacles (anchors) concerning the identification



of urban poverty. After group work in duos, the participants presented their ideas of desirable outcomes, of bottlenecks and the current situation of the identification of urban poverty.

The **goals** to be achieved were identified as the following:

1. To set up a forum to discuss urban poverty and to identify tools (measures, statistics, methods, studies) on urban scales, and improving the knowledge of different dimensions and affected groups (elderly, migrants, lone parents, children) of poverty beyond the identification of poverty areas using good examples from other countries;
2. To monitor progress to yield evidence-based policies for combatting urban poverty and using social impact indicators evaluating EU policies;
3. To agree on a comprehensive and homogenous identification of social and spatial dimensions of urban poverty, to be achieved inter alia by creating national and European observatories and by installing comparable, detailed measures for relative and absolute poverty in small geographical units (regional and local level).

Participants identified a number of **obstacles** in achieving these goals:

1. Obstacles related to the analysis and evaluation of anti-poverty policies like the lack of long-term evaluations and the lack of common data between member states (which could be solved by launching a cooperation with the help of the JRC) and the lack of knowledge about data availability in other countries;
2. A lack of funding (to be solved by better cooperation among different funds);
3. The inconsistency of EU policies, especially concerning the relation between fiscal and social goals and the lack of political commitment (which could be tackled with the Urban Agenda serving as vehicle for creating commitment).

2.2.2 Workshop 2: Poverty, Welfare and the Labour Market

General aim

This workshop's aim was to shed light on the labour market related aspects of urban poverty. As both sessions showed, this thematic focus does not come without pitfalls. The main reason for the conceptual complexity of the topic was the fact that labour markets and welfare systems are shaped by a myriad of factors, many of which are not regulated on the local level. The workshop showed the importance of integrated approaches to poverty eradication on various levels of government.

Speakers

Mr Lloyd Broad, Head of European and International Affairs in the Birmingham City Council, shared with the participants the Birmingham approach to making locally operant businesses contribute to the local economic performance in a sustainable and meaningful way. He introduced the Birmingham Business Charter. This Charter, obligatory for businesses with an annual volume of contracts and grants



exceeding £200,000, obliges firms to pay the so-called Birmingham living wage, to practise ethical procurement, to provide appropriate working conditions, to actively contribute to local employment, and to act as partners within their communities.

Morning session

First, the discussion revolved around Mr Broad's input and the feasibility of such approaches concerning the responsibility of enterprises in the local economy. Mr Broad highlighted that such approaches were highly place-sensitive, which asked for tailor-made initiatives. He presented the Charter as one practical measure established by the municipality that was installed without any EU money involved. Ms Colini voiced criticism of local business development policies in the form of so-called Business Improvement Districts (BID). She pointed to the exclusionary dynamics that might arise from such spatially active business activation measures. Mr Broad objected and indicated that long-term economic development might outweigh short-term exclusionary implications of certain local economy activation policies. He held that, in general, municipalities needed to make more use of the instruments available for local job creation, harnessing, inter alia, companies' growing sensitivity to Corporate Social Responsibility. He also said that real-time monitoring systems measuring the longer-term impact of measures like the Birmingham Business Charter (along the supply chain) still needed to be installed.

Then, the moderator Ms Jenny Koutsomarkou from URBACT invited the participants to engage in a feedback session on the scoping paper, taking into consideration the parts it provided in terms of labour market policies and welfare provision in order to prevent people slipping off into poverty. The scoping paper draft's main parts dealing with labour markets elaborate on inclusive labour markets and on minimum income schemes (chapter 2.2). One **key message** contained in the scoping paper identified by participants was the multi-level character of the fight against (urban) poverty, containing synergies, but also contradictions, between EU and member states' policies and enforcement regimes.

Important aspects mentioned in this vein were:

1. The need for an overarching EU anti-(urban-)poverty strategy;
2. The lack of systematic data availability;
3. The importance of setting up prioritised Social Impact Indicators in addition to the existing macroeconomic indicators used in the European Semester process;
4. The relevance of poverty-explicit European funds with stricter targets and of sound evaluations of existing funding instruments; and
5. The need for a more differentiated approach to Country-Specific Recommendations (CSR), taking into account regional disparities to a much larger degree.

Concerning the establishment of a general framework for identifying and combatting urban poverty, it was argued that there were similar causal factors of poverty to be addressed by such a framework, while concrete funding should be limited to addressing pockets of deprivation and to targeting the most deprived people and areas. Participants identified as particularly **useful aspects** provided by the scoping paper: the call for integrating policies, the need for a well-defined EU Social Pillar and for a



general ‘urbanisation’ of EU policies, and for comprehensive Urban Impact Assessments within a results framework. The participants also **missed some aspects** in the scoping paper draft, namely a more comprehensive elaboration on labour market and welfare-related policies and challenges and their relation to urban poverty. Ms Colini highlighted that the reason for discussing this aspect rather shortly in the scoping paper was that the upcoming partnership on jobs and skills would deal with those issues in a much more fundamental way. She pointed to the need to find a modus in which synergies between the partnerships could be ensured. There was consensus among participants that all crucial aspects of urban poverty needed to be reflected in both the scoping paper and in the action plan, bearing in mind that specialised partnerships also work on these topics. The stakeholders also asked for a comprehensive mapping of urban poverty in all member states. Furthermore, participants suggested to deal with topics like child poverty and housing in a less separated way in the scoping paper – and, more importantly, in the action plan – and to address their interlinked character. Lastly, it was suggested to pay more attention to local assets and specificities.

The morning session ended with a discussion about the appropriateness of place-based approaches. Opinions on this were mixed. Mr Broad pointed to the fact that the new place-based instruments like ITI and CLLD allowed for integrated territory-based funding for the first time and that cities naturally had a place-based perspective. Still, the impact of long-standing measures targeting deprived areas was called into question.

Afternoon session

In the afternoon session, Ms Koutsomarkou asked all participants to imagine an unemployed person they knew personally and to explicate a desirable future situation for these people. This served as a hook for participants to identify goals/objectives (islands) and hindrances/obstacles to achieving them (anchors) with a view to the topic at hand, namely welfare provision and labour markets.

It became clear that regional heterogeneity was critical in order to define even basic objectives of local economic development: while in structurally weak places, access to basic infrastructure and facilities could be defined as the prime goal, in more dynamic areas, job creation and people’s personal development opportunities would be central to any such reflections. According to the baseline, the priorities with regard to local economic and labour market development will differ massively.

Despite these fundamental differences to be taken into account, participants defined as general goals and **objectives** concerning labour market and welfare provision to fight exclusion and poverty:

1. Stable working environments with jobs based on skills and needs of people;
2. Dynamic labour markets;
3. Decent salary;
4. Empowerment of those who cannot offer their workforce to society.



As **obstacles** to reaching these goals, stakeholders defined:

1. The lack of a comprehensive EU framework addressing urban poverty;
2. The inflexibility of EU funding and fund silos (ERDF, ESF, EaSI, COSME, Horizon 2020, etc.) for local areas and their specific challenges; and
3. Bottlenecks due to central governments' employment and skills policies, curtailing leeway for local actors concerning the management of locally specific labour market and welfare provision challenges.

There was unity that local solutions to identify and manage people's skills, and also to address potential local skills mismatches, required more strongly devolved powers from the national to the local level – making municipalities the brokers of local economic development.

2.2.3 Workshop 3: Access to Quality Public Services

General aim

The workshop's aim was to get a clear picture of the relationship between public services and urban poverty and social exclusion. Public services contain a wide variety of elements such as education and training, health care, social services and transportation.

Speakers

The moderators of the sessions were Ms Beverly Bernard and Mr Rik Baeten from PPS Social integration in Belgium and a presentation was given in the first session by Mr Emmanuel Rivière from TNS Sofres, France. Mr Rivière presented the results of the study of the urban, socio-economic and cultural needs of inhabitants of deprived neighbourhoods done for CGET. The results were based on interviews held in five different neighbourhoods. Mr Rivière gave an extensive overview of the causes of poverty and exclusion based on these interviews, like the role of the current system of social aid and the role of schools. One of the key messages was that support for deprived neighbourhoods should focus on enabling people to help themselves and not relieve poverty for a short period.

Morning session

Following the explanation by the moderators, the morning session started with the presentation of Mr Rivière. Based on the results of the TNS Sofres study for CGET on the "urban, socioeconomic and cultural needs of inhabitants of deprived neighbourhoods", he stressed the importance of high-quality, inclusive and outreaching public services to fight financial poverty, among other forms of poverty. The conducted interviews showed that social poverty and isolation appear in conjunction with material poverty and people in poverty report self-exclusion from activities such as going out with friends, going to cultural events, taking children out for an activity, etc. In this context, school was scrutinised as a



lever for fighting social inequalities and the question was asked: is it the solution or the beginning of the troubles? Mr Rivière held that it seemed that the school system was not fulfilling its promise in deprived neighbourhoods and that it even contributed to the general fatalism of their inhabitants. He conceded that asking for public services in a context of austerity was difficult, but public authorities also needed to stimulate confidence and offer a different perspective on deprived neighbourhoods. Following the presentation, the question was raised, not for the last time this day, whether there should be a national policy on urban poverty and if that was more important than an approach on the local level. It was stated that, the economy seemed to dominate the current debate on urban poverty. Participants held that European funds do not directly support local approaches to urban poverty because of the lack of resources (time) of cities, especially small and medium-sized cities, in getting access to the funds.

Ms Sonia de Gregoria Hurtado from the Department of Urban and Spatial Planning of the School of Architecture (Technical University of Madrid) had been asked to kick off the debate on the scoping paper by giving her feedback. She started by stating that the scoping paper gave a broad overview of urban poverty in Europe and contained a lot of valuable information on the role of public services in relation to urban poverty. Ms de Gregoria Hurtado raised questions and provided some additions and suggestions with regard to the following topics:

Health

- How are medical facilities located in the city (sanitary centres at neighbourhood level, speciality medical centre, etc.)? Are they equally accessible to all?
- City of short distances: it supports the daily life of all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable (old people, ill people, single-parent families, carers, etc.)
- Contextual factors (neighbourhood characteristics, pollution, noise, level of quality of urban space, perceived safety, provision of green areas, etc.)
- Demographic challenge of areas

Public transport

- Lack of public transport connectivity can isolate poorer urban areas from urban dynamics, perpetuating poverty
- Different social groups have different patterns of mobility and different needs regarding public transport (e.g. “polygonal pattern” versus “pendular pattern”; “safety factor”, which is particularly important for women). There is a need for relevant statistics.
- Public transport should be planned taking into account other sectoral policies (housing, job market, etc.) in order to avoid geographically, financially or socially exclusive transport systems

Other public services

- Child care (nurseries) (addressed by another workshop)
- Day-care centres for the elderly
- Retirement residences for the elderly
- (Day) Centres for handicapped people
- Should we include other kinds of public services in our reflection?



Public space

- The level of quality of the public space is a key issue. Environmental decline can start and perpetuate “poverty”.

The moderator Ms Bernard started the interactive session of the workshop in which participants were asked to answer three questions with regards to the scoping paper that was sent prior to the meeting. Based on the response, key messages linked to the workshop topic could be highlighted and elements that could be improved or are still missing were identified. In order to give every participant the chance to contribute, the group was split in pairs to discuss these questions.

The identified **key messages** of public services of the partnership were discussed first. Homelessness is one of the key elements that was addressed and the statement that public services play a vital role of putting poverty on the agenda. It was mentioned that schools play an important social function as well, and that they could be integrated in the fight against social exclusion, creating ownership. One aspect that was mentioned to require more attention was the investigation of how cities and urban authorities can be enabled through Europe and not the other way around.

Useful parts of the scoping paper were discussed afterwards. Participants of the workshop acknowledged the importance of looking for synergies between area- and people-based approaches. The public services described in the scoping paper were all deemed relevant, especially health and education. The effective use of funds was seen as an important section since it also forms the basis for the improvements on better funding. Participants held that one key issue of urban poverty was the lack of a dedicated office or unit at the different governmental levels, requiring the integration of different themes. Thus, the description of a holistic approach was evaluated as very relevant.

Different topics were mentioned concerning what was **missing or could be improved** in the current version of the scoping paper. Not everyone had been able to read the full paper prior to the seminar. First of all, participants held that the danger of exclusion of the elderly and other vulnerable groups could be highlighted more (other than child poverty). Also, the use of public space and how this supports daily life for citizens was raised as important. This point was related to the request for a new economic model which shows how to make people benefit from urban investments (as part of an area-based approach). The question was raised how municipalities can work together in tackling urban poverty by learning from each other or by joining forces in their regions. Participants stressed the link between the perception of safety and violence and delinquents in deprived neighbourhoods (linked to public spaces as well). There was a pledge not to ignore the diversity of public services. According to stakeholders, the scoping paper should anticipate some new challenges as well, such as IT-related developments. It was stressed that communication around the policies of urban poverty should focus on inclusion and people should not be labelled as poor in these policies.

Another section that would prove **helpful** is how the partnership can influence European policy itself and how it could make it more results-driven in social areas. It was encouraged that such a section could also be part of the action plan. All assessments and suggestions should, according to the participants, be linked to concrete situations that citizens are facing.



Afternoon session

Mr Baeten explained the working method for the second session after Ms Bernard had given a brief overview of the discussions during the first session. During the second session, the participants were asked to work in pairs to identify the goals/objectives (islands) of the urban poverty partnership, the hindrances/obstacles (anchors) in achieving those, and think of some first steps in creating solutions.

The main **objectives** that were discussed were:

1. Equal access, high quality of public services available to all;
2. The approach to urban poverty should be based on collaborative governance (all stakeholders, commitment of all actors);
3. The quality of the urban environment should be high. In the discussion, other elements were mentioned: policies should always focus on the wellbeing of people, small and medium-sized cities need to be supported in design and implementation of policies from EU funds, and the EU level should take the national differences into account or at least be flexible to allow for differences in context.

The following **obstacles** to realise these objectives were identified:

1. Lack of knowledge due to bad access to information;
2. Lack of participation: poor infrastructure (schools, sports);
3. Lack of funds, inefficient social protection system related to immigrants and refugees;
4. Integration policies are too weak and need strengthening;
5. Regulation of urban poverty is too soft. This is a problem on all levels (European, national, local);
6. Dependency on local political short term thinking. Policies with regards to urban poverty need durable solutions;
7. Public services are spread out over too many different groups/ministries, leading to a lack of coherent policies;
8. More power to NGOs looks good on paper but is very different to implement: in some areas NGOs are very strong, but this is not always the case. It is difficult to decide on when the impact of involving NGO is biggest;
9. Lack of a collaborative approach between different levels of government;
10. Stability Pact does not help to alleviate urban poverty: solidarity within Europe in distribution of funds based on poverty needs is needed (European distribution of wealth);
11. Lack of national policies on urban poverty;
12. There is no automatic distribution of social support;
13. Every country should have a national strategy to fight poverty; monitoring from the EU is necessary and could form a first step for a social Europe.

The list above shows a great number of issues, which were discussed in an open and free debate. There was no time to rank the different anchors. Some of the elements mentioned go beyond public services alone, but were still worth mentioning.



2.2.4 Workshop 4: Child Poverty

General aim

The workshop's aim was to get a clear picture of the main factors affecting child poverty. The scoping paper describes the effect of social transfers: the composition of the household in which a child lives; the parents' labour market situation; the mother's own working status; the parents' educational level; and the parents' country of birth. The sessions aimed for a debate on the content of the scoping paper and its missing and most important elements.

Speakers

The moderators of the session were Mr Julien van Geertsom, President of the Federal Public Planning Service for Social Integration in Belgium and Mr Vassilis Arapoglou from the University of Crete. Mr Van Geertsom gave a presentation to introduce the topic. He stated that, as statistics showed, the number of children in Europe growing up in poverty is way too high, which represents an unacceptable situation in the well-developed Europe. He added that the causes for poverty however were not easy to grasp, forbidding black-and-white assessments like a sole focus on joblessness.

Morning session

Mr Van Geertsom gave a presentation on the key factors and causes of child poverty and indicated the importance of the topic. As he showed, in 2014, more than two thirds of children living in jobless households in Europe were living below the poverty threshold. He added that although working parents are the best protection against child poverty, this does not cover everything. Many Member States have replaced universal family support with means-tested measures or payment ceilings, highly affecting child and family-related benefits. Mr Van Geertsom added that the education level of parents influenced the level of education of their children as well, and that access to good education was therefore extremely important. He deplored the many examples of school discrimination, segregating children with a minority/migrant background from other children. He held that addressing child poverty and promoting children's well-being through multi-dimensional and integrated strategies got high priority recently during the Netherlands Presidency. The Heckman curve presented by Mr Van Geertsom illustrated that investments in the earliest years will have the highest return of investment.

The Social Investment Plan of the Commission and several National Actions plans built around the three pillars:

- Access to adequate resources;
- Access to affordable quality services;
- Children's right to participate.

Mr Van Geertsom held that despite continuous political attention to the issue, according to non-governmental organisations serious concerns remain. NGOs fight for:



1. More rigorous monitoring and reporting, including setting of sub-targets in the Europe 2020 strategy and the development of better indicators for children's wellbeing;
2. The development of a multiannual roadmap setting out implementation plans for the Commission's recommendation, and
3. A commitment to long-term funding, particularly through earmarking portions of the structural funds for investments to help reduce poverty and exclusion.

Mr Arapoglou highlighted that data from UNICEF-Innocenti Research Centre studies and reports (cf. card 12: "Children of the recession") can assist in the documentation of child poverty and it shows how the erosion of social protection systems and universal coverage constitutes a great leap backwards for Europe; one which impacts extremely negatively on child poverty. He showed that in southern European countries like Greece, Italy and Spain, as well as in Croatia, the Baltic States, Iceland, and Ireland, child poverty rose by 10 to 20 points, i.e. 50% or more. Mr Arapoglou concluded that social investment should not be a substitute for social protection.

With the group split up in pairs, the participants were asked to state the key messages of the scoping paper and mention elements that are still missing or would need further development. The debate that followed was about identifying the **key messages** on child poverty. First of all, participants agreed that a holistic approach was needed and that early intervention in families has proven to be helpful (even before a child is born) and that support given should be focussed on entire families. One of the elements needed to achieve an integration of different forms of aid to families would be, according to participants, to create better cooperation on a local level, e.g. between local authorities and voluntary activities. Children and their parents would also need to fully participate in social institutions. Schools were seen as highly important institutions for social integration, i.a. due to their key role in identifying poverty. Stakeholders called for the role of teachers in this process to be investigated more as well. Offers to early school leavers and after-school activities were presented as elements of a safety net for children.

Elements that were **missing or that would need further attention** in the scoping paper were discussed subsequently. These included:

1. Harder and more binding regulation on different policy levels, as actions too often depended on the goodwill of local people, creating an unwanted dependency;
2. The need for Europe to provide unified policies in Europe on how to tackle child poverty, creating better understanding and better chances for knowledge exchange, e.g. by providing a framework for knowledge exchange on European funding and financial support;
3. Furthermore, the overall responsibility for child poverty must be placed in one department or institution to prevent that it is scattered over many different departments.



Afternoon session

Using the speedboat method, participants were asked to define key objectives and obstacles concerning the topic at hand, namely (the prevention of) child poverty. The **main objectives/goals** that were mentioned were:

1. To realise the 2020 targets set out by Europe;
2. To safeguard the implementation of children rights;
3. To create a society where poverty is no burden for children to fully take part in society;
4. To recognise the role of parents in tackling child poverty within a family approach, while bearing in mind the special needs of unaccompanied children.

Following the discussion on the objectives for child poverty, **obstacles** were identified. First of all, poverty in itself was identified as a barrier for self-development. This goes for children as well. A child born in poverty will have troubles to develop in life, partly due to a lack of good access to public services. This of course has been debated in workshop 3 and it is also a reason why family support for the very poor is crucial for children. The uneven distribution of wealth in cities (and throughout the world) was seen as leading to exclusion and a whole range of problems that feed child poverty and general poverty. Segregation in public schools also reflects this uneven distribution and basically underlines the fact that not everyone will have the same chances in society, according to the participants. They defined EU funding for building education infrastructure as a welcomed support to tackle this. Participants also emphasised that a children rights approach should form the basis for developing a holistic and integrated strategy. The stakeholders stressed that this included accepting that compensating only for extremely low income was ineffective, that family policies alone were insufficient, and that partnerships should involve children's right advocates, networks and Ombudsmen, etc. Empowerment and advancing the participation of children and their parents in the design and implementation of local policies was also seen as a means for addressing neighbourhood deprivation and poverty.

2.3 Closing plenary

After the workshop sessions had been held, the seminar participants gathered in the plenary hall again to hear some concluding comments. Mr Mart Grisel, director of the EUKN, expressed his gratitude for all participants' engagement in the seminar and Mr Vassilis Arapoglou gave his view on the discussions of the day.

Mr Julien Van Geertsom's concluding remarks of the day led to two important orientations for the future discussions on the partnership's action plan. Both these items relate on the one hand to legislation regarding deficit control of Member States and on the other hand to the development of a new funding tool in the fight against poverty. He held that in the fight against poverty – in general and particularly in urban areas – the role of public services at all levels was crucial and the availability of financial resources represented a continuous political struggle. He added that a clear message of commitment from the European Commission to Europe 2020 targets, including the target on poverty,



could translate into the exclusion of EU-funded social investments in the calculation of the 3% deficit balance of states within the monitoring of public finances and Member States' levels of public deficit.

In late 2015, a Resolution of the European Parliament called on Member States and the Commission to do more to reduce inequalities and especially to focus on child poverty. Because children are the adults of tomorrow and fighting poverty starts with offering them the best start in life. Mr Van Geertsom stated that investing in children's services is not discarding their parents' situation, it is treating them on the same level and requesting they benefit from the highest quality services as well, tailored to *their needs* (i.e. housing adapted to the whole family, healthcare from birth and even before birth, childcare whether parents have sufficient means or not and a minimum level of education for *every single child*). According to Mr Van Geertsom, in light of the fight against child poverty being a priority of the urban poverty partnership, the concept of a dedicated fund to ensure all children "have access to free healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition", in other words a Child Guarantee, is a concrete proposal to reintroduce a strong social and anti-poverty dimension in the current configuration of structural funds.



3 Conclusions and recommendations for the partnership

The aim of the seminar was to use the scoping paper as a point for departure for the discussions and to provide input for a renewed version of the scoping paper and first suggestions for the action plan that will be developed by the end of the year 2016. This report gives a written overview of these discussions and suggestions that were given. The partnership and the experts will take these discussions into account.

The discussions and input given during the sessions of the seminar are very valuable to guide the partnership in its work. There is a risk that the scoping paper and action plan will become too general and too little focused on the three key areas of the Urban Agenda for the EU: better regulation, better funding and better knowledge exchange.

Urban Poverty is a complex, if not “wicked” problem. This makes it extremely difficult to focus on specific elements since all aspects of the problem are related. From a governance perspective, urban poverty is also complex because a wide variety of governmental bodies and organisations are involved. This makes it difficult to list policy/funding/knowledge instruments that relate simultaneously to urban and poverty matters.

This being said, it is important for the Partnership to bring in a strong focus on urban poverty. A realistic view is needed for what a partnership can solve and how different governmental bodies, including cities, can contribute to concrete proposals aiming at better regulation, better funding and better knowledge exchange.

It was agreed at the Seminar that the scoping paper should be shorter, more focused to better reflect the urban dimension of the partnership’s working theme.

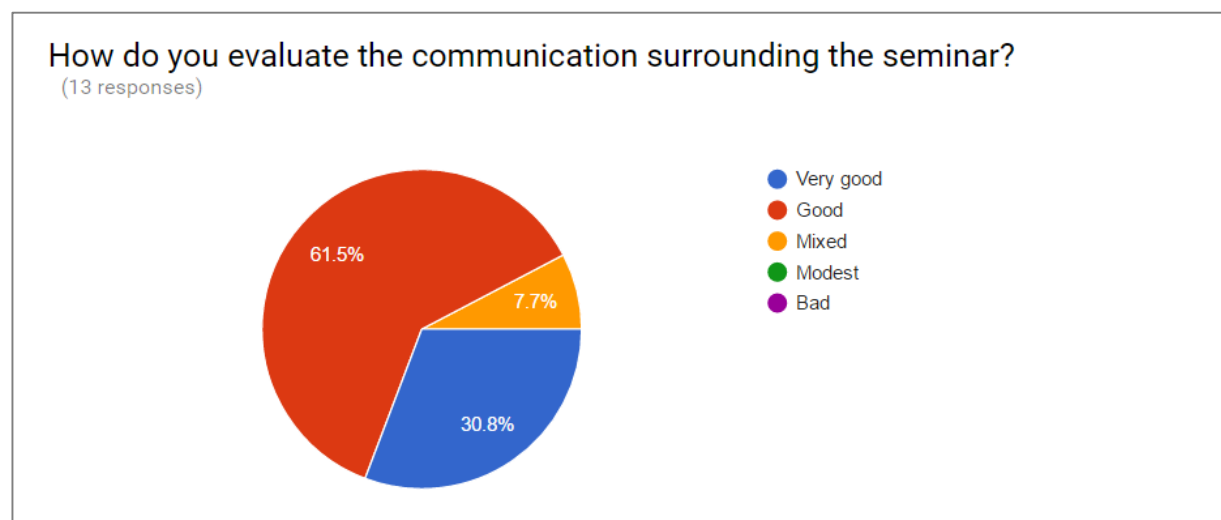
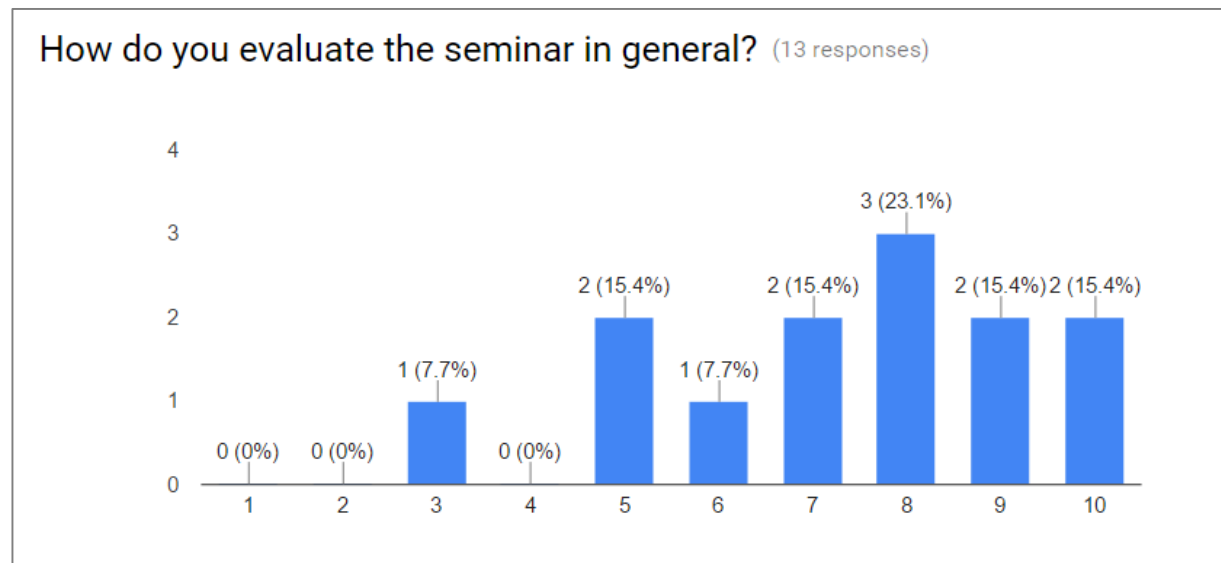
The objective of the EUKN Seminar was to involve a wider range of stakeholders to reflect on the first draft of the scoping paper and to provide input for the next version of the scoping paper as well as for the Action Plan. This report will enable the experts to do so.



Annex: Evaluation

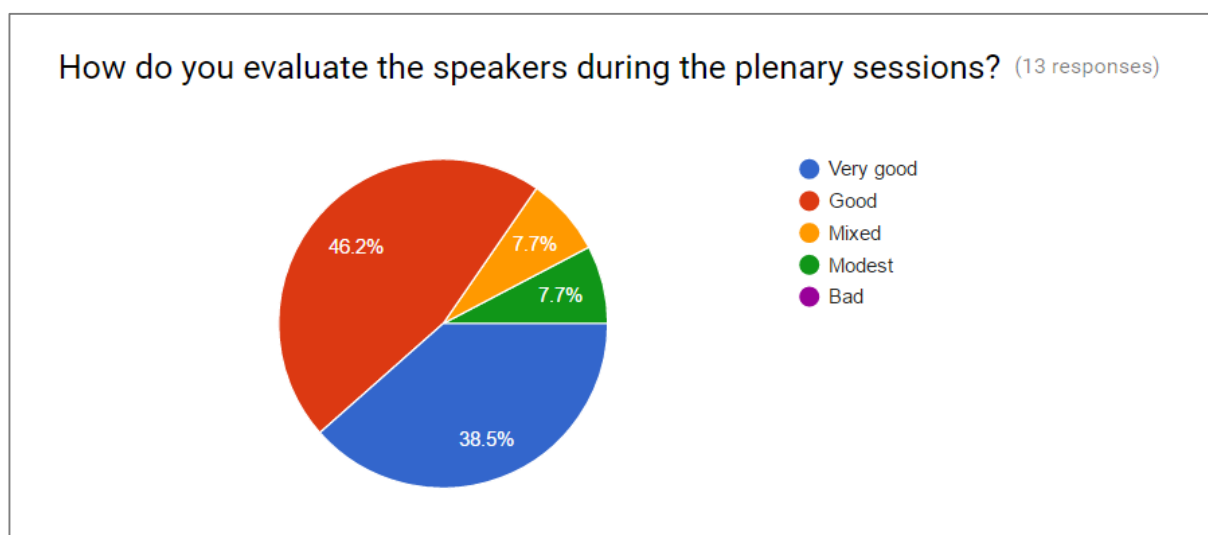
After the Seminar had been held, it was anonymously evaluated online. A relatively small number of 13 participants responded to the short survey distributed via Google Forms. However, even such a small number can allow important insights into positive and negative aspects as perceived by participating stakeholders. The key aspects emerging from this evaluation are presented in the following.

The overall evaluations were positive, reflecting in an average rating of 7.3. Still, there is room for improvement, when looking at one rating of only 3 and the range of marks given between 5 and 10. Also, communication surrounding the event and the venue (The Ionic Centre in Athens) were evaluated positively.





The workshop sessions, too, received overall good ratings, even if individual participants rated different workshops as “modest” (six respondents in the morning session and six respondents in the afternoon session) or even “bad” (three respondents in the morning session and one respondent in the afternoon session). Concerning the plenary session, speakers received positive feedback; the Deputy Mayor of Athens Ms Stratigaki received specific appraisal in a comment.



At the end of the survey, participants could give concluding comments. This is a selection:

- Homelessness & public urban space would be an excellent topic for the partnership at a future seminar.
- I am not sure how these events can affect the leadership of the European Union and produce results in favour of the poor people by changing EU politics.
- I believe presenting and exchanging more experiences on the field, perhaps from countries outside EU, would be very useful.
- The experimental side of workshop was the most fruitful part of the event.
- Good event and a good initiative. These events should be happening as often as possible. As long the discussion keeps going and growing, the hope about a solution to the poverty problem in Europe gets more realisable. A network like EUKN can find ways to make the results from these events hearable to the European leadership.