

Make the Future Work Activation: what's happening?

National Conference
28th September, 2010



IRELAND IN SOCIAL EUROPE
CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS CHANGING REALITIES



THE EUROPEAN ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK

in association with

COMMUNITY WORKERS' CO-OPERATIVE
CORK CITY COUNCIL, SOCIAL INCLUSION UNIT
IRISH NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED
NORTHERN IRELAND ANTI POVERTY NETWORK
VINCENTIAN PARTNERSHIP FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



**Presentation on Activation
Project Findings**

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“Ireland in Social Europe”

Overall Project Objectives

- Enhance understanding of poverty in Ireland and promote a national debate on the implications for national and European policy.
- Raise awareness of the added value of an European response.
- Promote innovative strategies for how the EU, through the Open Method of Co-ordination, can contribute to ending poverty in Ireland.

Project Partners

- Community Workers' Cooperative
- Cork City Council, Social Inclusion Unit
- European Anti-Poverty Network (Ireland)
 - lead partner
- Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
- Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network
- Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice

INOOU Project Role

Leading Active Labour Market Inclusion theme via:

- 4 focus groups;
- Training with 8-12 individuals interested in participating in national / European policy structures and debates;
- Burning issues paper on activation highlighting the issues raised during focus group/training discussion;
- 3 regional and 1 national roundtable debates on activation and the EU dimension;
- Key messages/story for public awareness initiative in context of 2010 Year.

Four Focus Groups

- Finglas; Dundalk; Cork and Galway.
- Input on:
 - what is activation;
 - who delivers it;
 - policy context at the national and European level.
- Participants discussed:
 - Interactions with, experiences of Employment & Social Services;
 - Job seeking; Community Employment / Jobs Initiative;
 - Training & Education;
 - Building More Effective Services.

Key Points: experiences

- Experience of SWO varied from good to could be better to you needed to know more than they do. Time spent talking to someone insufficient to get a real understanding of entitlements and options.
- Experience of FÁS courses and work placements varied from the positive to the critical: content relevance; length; availability; accessibility; lack of aftercare and follow up.
- Word of mouth seen as important source of information.
- Strong sense that technology is not being optimised.
- A sense of being damned if you do and damned if you don't when you try to keep yourself occupied. The lack of jobs is the problem: being activated into what?

Key Points: Job seeking

- Pro-active support from services to find employment.
- What the job is, should be linked to what the job needs, not a degree to get basic jobs.
- ‘its not what you know but who you know’.
- Experience is seen as essential in finding work.
- Challenge of working on temporary contract and supportive interaction with social welfare system.
- When trying to prove genuinely seeking work you need to have contact back from employers.
- Social interaction suffers when you are unemployed and you aren't a part of the informal networks.

Key Points: Training & Education

- Importance of supportive & informed service provider.
- Well planned & structured courses delivered by good instructors critical.
- Cost of participation in meaningful courses.
- What next if deemed as too highly qualified for available course because of existing qualifications?
- What next if there is no obvious progression option to the FETAC course pursued up to that point?
- Why threaten to cut people's social welfare payments when provision is inadequate?
- Concerns raised that employers don't value courses.

Key Points: Building Effective Services

- System needs to be geared towards the individual's needs and be more innovative in its responses.
- Up-to-date information more widely available would facilitate better decision making. Communication across schemes and providers needs to improve to facilitate participation.
- Different thinking in the systems is required. Culture in SWO needs to shift from an authoritative and processing role to assisting people.
- Given increased flexibility in the labour market: SW system should look at total working hours in a week and not working days.

- Maximising use of online facilities: SWO should learn from revenue.ie website.
- They need to understand what qualifications you already have and look at how you can progress: not just send you on courses that are of no benefit.
- Experience is key to being able to get a job. The services need to do all they can to make work placements and work experience available to the unemployed which are:
 - relevant to the person's training;
 - not been used to replace paid jobs;
 - Government leads by example.
- Simplifying the process of starting your own business and getting access to funding for good ideas.

Three Regional Roundtables

- **Presentation on project purpose and findings.**
- **Round Table Discussions:**
 - Participants own work and experience
 - What is working?
 - What is not working?
 - Building better service outcomes
- **Feedback from Round Table discussions**
- **What is happening at an European level including “Europe 2020”.**

What is working?

- Personal contact in services are seen as vital for clients and lead to the better outcomes.
- Importance of process noted: local consultation to assess needs and identify how they could be best meet.
- Agencies and community groups working together to reach hard to reach groups.
- High Support Process: collaboration seen as effective.
- Case conferencing / active case management models.
- The Dundalk SWO initiative: claims by appointment.
- Specific educ / train initiatives targeting particular groups.
- Useful programmes: BTEA; BTWEA; STEA; WPP; BTEI; CE

What is not working?

- Services not geared for 12%+ unemployment: more funding is required.
- The speed with which the labour market changes means services are far behind reality on the ground.
- NEAP seen as being out of date and out of step with the current labour market reality.
- System not working anywhere near effectively enough.
- Lack of mainstreaming of effective initiatives.
- Disconnect between policy makers and practitioners: crisis management: top down: not properly informed.
- Re-activating a claim can be a nightmare.

- Activation in such a constrained labour market was questioned.
- Barriers: childcare; transport; Garda clearance; insurance; accessing broadband.
- Education & training demand > supply
- Using the big stick approach of threatening to cut off peoples entitlements unless they go on a course creates resentment.
- Loss of BTWA seen as a huge blow to helping people back in to work.
- WPP Strand 2: concerns raised: employers need to contribute.
- Smart economy: employment strategy or policy objective? Lacks implementation and funding.
- Supports for small biz development: EI; CEB: negative implications of reduced resources.

Building Effective Services

- One Stop Shop: DSP + FAS + Revenue? Co-ordination of training / education courses across Uni/FAS/VEC.
- Improved integration: more proactive not reactive.
- Information ↻ needs to be improved so it's easier for individual to find information: use IT; public spaces.
- Need client focused system not rules based one: need to think outside of the box.
- Flexibility: need to fight bums on seats approach: must match right person to right opportunity.
- Improved quantity and quality of person centred guidance.

- Proper and robust assessments of individuals and of possible future areas of employment are required.
- Recognition of prior learning is essential.
- Progression routes are vital and the links up the chain need to be clearly identified: work together to make this happen.
- Need for smoother transition between social welfare, employment, education / training.
- Job Creation needs to become a reality: applications for jobs should be acknowledged.
- Local community organisations and unemployed people need to be involved in discussing where and how jobs will be created.
- Build on enterprise / entrepreneurial ability of self-employed.

Europe 2020

- Replacing the Lisbon Strategy under which Ireland reports on the National Employment Action Plan.
- 3 mutually reinforcing growth priorities: smart; sustainable; and inclusive.
- 5 Headline targets including:
 - “75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed.”
 - “20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.”
- 7 Flagship Initiatives including:
 - “An agenda for new skills and jobs”
 - “European platform against poverty”