



SOCIAL ON BUSINESS POLICY BRIEF

1. OVERVIEW

All partners of the "Social on Business" project had previous experience of working with the disadvantaged groups and communities. The experience and expertise was gathered in various fields and via different types of activities. These activities rang from support to disabled people (Enham), support at recent enterprises, workers over the age 45, workers with low educational qualifications, drop out and unemployed women (Form. Art), support to unemployed via means of training and advice (MARR S.A.), and creation of social enterprises in deprived areas (Fundación Red Andalucía Emprrende). Long before the project was started the partners were aware that an orchestrated approach to support to the disadvantaged people was needed. This could be exemplified by generating a framework for activities that need to be carried out to actually support the disadvantaged groups. The year 2000 and the meeting of the European Council in Lisbon brought a very important decision, which set a number of goals "to be the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world with the greatest social cohesion by 2010". This statement refocused the attention of the policy makers and politicians to the social issues, which have a huge impact on the economy. As the President of the European Commission, Jacques Santer, had stated at the European Forum on Social Policy "there can be no social progress without economic progress, but conversely, economic wealth cannot be built in a social desert " (Hantrais; 2000:19).

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CURRENT POLICIES

Every Member State has some policies towards encouraging entrepreneurial activity of its citizens. Whilst clearly there are some difference of approach and legal structures vary the majority follow a similar structure. One of the most common tools is the way business start-up support is structured. Yet, as the partners observed, based on the previous experience, the state does not provide mainstream support for the disadvantaged groups.

3. IMPROVEMENT IDEAS GENERATED FROM THE PROJECT AND PILOTS

DIVERGENCES/ SIMILARITIES OF ISSUES	IMPROVEMENT IDEAS
Legal framework for starting businesses	Ensuring all legal structures surrounding business start-up are easily understood, inexpensive and accessible to all potential entrepreneurs.
The seemingly negative tax regime in one Region	Research is needed to investigate the negative effect of present tax policies and potential new tax policies that avoid disincentivising business-starts
Variances in the social attributes where large areas of deprivation exist. This issue was present in two of the four regions	Further research is recommended as it seems that support may need to be geared to provide additional specialized provision where large areas of deprivation exist.
Alternative positive outcomes e.g. training and employment were seen as an important part of the overall provision	Ensure enterprise support programs for DGs include the ability to promote and foster alternative positive outcomes.
Lack of understanding of mainstream business advice/information/training services to support disadvantaged groups	Select and train business advisers/trainers/mentors to enable them to deal effectively with people from DGs





DIVERGENCES/ SIMILARITIES OF ISSUES	IMPROVEMENT IDEAS
Difficulties with engagement of people from disadvantaged groups who may be suitable for starting a business.	More research into engaging with DGs to understand how this can be done effectively and efficiently to bring the desired results. We believe a 'feet on the street' approach and working through other, local community and voluntary organizations that are already known and trusted may be a suitable approach
Numerous points of contact for DGs to access support cause confusion and duplicate resource	Create only one referent point with a single person supporting the DG to start the advising process, a Coordinator.
Lack of confidence and self-esteem exhibited in the Digs. Can be overcome with specialist and sustained support.	Support for people from DGs needs to be on a one-to one basis with the same co-ordinator and/or business adviser and sustained over period of time. The network coordinator must have the kind of skills to motivate, help overcome barriers and make the process easier.
People from DGs need one to one support, especially to understand financial issues. We recognize the small group approach can also be really effective when dealing with disadvantaged groups. This support cost-efficient, but the networking/shared problem-solving and realization that there are others like them, can be invaluable and greatly appreciated.	More research into engaging with DGs to understand how this can be done effectively to bring the desired results. The Network Coordinator must be able to activate processes either on a "one to one" or of "small group". The small group method is useful in order to face the common technical aspects to the development of an entrepreneurial idea; the one to one method must be used in order to reach personalized solutions (i.e.: the business plan can be introduced to a small group; its adaptation and correction must be realised on one to one basis)
Difficulties of finding appropriate funding	Specialized funding streams should be made available for both market research and business start-up costs.
Fear of moving out of state benefits	More research is needed regarding methods to move people out of state benefits and into enterprise when initially earnings may be less or similar to the benefits they have been receiving
The time needed to support people from disadvantaged groups not just in the amount of support needed but the length of time over which it was spread.	Support needs to be tailored around self development as well as addressing the business issues Employment and training outcomes should be part of the objectives Support must also be provided once the business idea is seen to be viable to help carry forward the idea to implementation and the first few months of trading
Low educational achievement was not necessarily a barrier to starting an enterprise	More government/ regional publicity and support for this statement

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Our conclusions and recommendations are: -

1. More specific recommendations from policy makers should be made about the economic and social value of enterprise for disadvantaged groups.
1. Support activities should be coordinated across a region.
2. There needs to be a mechanism to monitor and improve the effectiveness of the coordinators acting in the region.
3. Coordinators should be given suitable support and training to handle DGs and their problems (i.e. mainly psychological and language).
4. There should be an interactive body that will contact and discuss policies and its improvements with other organizations engaged in support to the DGs, from the private, public administration and Third sectors.
5. Lastly but not of the least importance the support given to the DGs, must be easily accessible and well publicized.



