



Nine social innovation projects to support vulnerable groups

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AEIDL and other representatives of nine projects selected for [EaSI funding](#) met on 25-26 January for an online meeting to lay the groundwork for future networking between the projects and with relevant European Commission staff.

The launch of these nine projects supporting people in the most vulnerable situations could not come at a better time. Following the approval of the [European Pillar of Social Rights \(EPSR\)](#) in 2017, and the agreement at the Porto Social Summit last year to reduce the number of people at risk of social exclusion and poverty by at least 15 million, it is now the time to turn these principles into actions. All Member States are finishing their action plans so that in 2022 funding can start to flow to address the EU recommendations on issues such as long-term care, child guarantee, or minimum income. Only in this way can the EPSR goals for 2030, such as the eradication of homelessness, be met.

In the words of Jiri Svarc, Head of Unit at DG Employment attending the meeting, *“the reason for this [specific call for proposals](#) was to translate the policy initiatives into specific projects on the ground. Through this limited number of projects, the EC wants to make a small difference on the ground, connecting individual project promoters with the priorities that have been defined in the EU”*.

More precisely, the pilot in Miskolc and its eight "sibling projects" will address Principle 14 of the EPSR, which states that *“everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services. For those who can work, minimum income benefits should be combined with incentives to (re)integrate into the labour market”*.

COVID-19’s impact on social protection

The employment and social situation was improving across Europe before the COVID-19 crisis. However, despite the expansion of economic and employment, poverty and social exclusion remained high (over 21%) and significant differences among Members States persisted.

With the outbreak of the health crisis in 2020 and its consequences, the pressure on the social system and its deficiencies were made evident, with vulnerable groups suffering the worst. The fact that we must strengthen the EU social services is clear and we need to act now since social protection systems are expected to remain under pressure in the short and medium term.

Nine different projects, a common approach

The nine projects selected for EaSI funding and presented during the webinar are:

1. Lone Parents Digital Activation - Ireland
2. Un toit sur la tête, un job dans la poche – France
3. NOVA - Serbia

4. Rights First - Belgium
5. RETICULATE - Italy
6. CRIS – Germany
7. 4IM - Hungary
8. xEITU - Spain
9. C.O.P.E. - Italy

Whether they address the critical issue of homelessness in Brussels and Lyon, support lone parents in Ireland, Finland and Greece, or design comprehensive services helping marginalised groups and ethnic minorities such as migrants or the Roma population (like the 4IM project in Miskolc but also NOVA in Serbia and CRIS in Germany), the nine projects share several common features.

All the projects are based on the key concept of **active inclusion**, seeking to design and test integrated strategies that combine income support, inclusive labour market practices, and access to quality services.

Moreover, all projects' representatives highlighted that the holistic approach at local level, involving actors from different sectors, outreach to the target group, and the co-production of the services with all of the stakeholders, are the most innovative aspects of the interventions. Thanks to the EaSI funding received, they will be able to bring theoretical approaches to meet the reality closer to the local communities affected.

In the particular [case of Miskolc](#), to consolidate the collaboration among all the actors supporting vulnerable groups in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Tetemvár and Bábonybérc, and thus to end up with a more coordinated partnership-based process at local level based on the good relationship among the stakeholders, is one of the main expected results.

The transfer of knowledge among all these initiatives testing new intervention models for vulnerable people facing multiple barriers can be a core element for further transnational cooperation and to mainstream and upscale meaningful local actions to different or wider areas in Europe.

20/01/2022