



Integrated approaches to active welfare and employment policies

Portugal

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Chapter 1. The *Rendimento Mínimo Garantido* [Guaranteed Minimum Income] in Portugal

1. National context

1.1. Poverty and unemployment in Portugal

Poverty is a widespread structural phenomenon in Portuguese society. According to Eurostat figures, European Community Household Panel (2nd wave, 1995) (Barreiros, 2000), 23.9% of people were below the relative poverty line (PTE 517 680), calculated on the basis of 40% of the average income¹, translated into an equivalent adult. This poverty rate is well above the EU15 average, which was around 18% at the same time. Portugal therefore has the lowest net income per equivalent adult in the European Union (Table 1).

There is a close link between the concepts of poverty rate and its development and inequality and its prevalence in Portugal. An analysis of the first half of the 1990s alone shows that the incidence, intensity and severity of poverty in the national context tended to increase in line with an increase in inequality in the distribution of income. The increase in average household income in mainland Portugal (around 16.4%) recorded in this period was not accompanied by a more equitable distribution of income, and the extent of this increase in inequality differed regionally and amongst the different strata of the population (Ferreira and Farinha, 2000).

Although it is one of the countries with the highest poverty rates in the European Union, Portugal has low rates of unemployment. In comparative terms in 1998 the unemployment figures for the EU15 average (10.3%) were well above the rate of unemployment recorded in Portugal (around 4.9%) (Table 2). This rate reached the highest level of the decade in 1996, when around 7.3% of the working-age population was unemployed. Since then the figures for unemployment in Portugal have fallen, standing at 4.4% in 1999. The time required to find a job has increased, however, and the weight of long-term unemployment is very high (42.5%) (Table 3).

The fall in recent years has benefited both men and women and is marked in all age groups, with a particular impact on young people between 14 and 24 years of age. Unemployment in Portugal is nevertheless also characterised by higher rates among women (5.1% in 1999) than men (3.8% at the same time), and is particularly serious among young people between the ages of 14 and 24, followed by the 25 to 34 year-olds. The weight of the long-term unemployed was particularly significant throughout the 1990s, standing at around 44.5% in 1998.

The information available also provides some indications of child labour. Out of 1 093 039 children surveyed², 4% (43 213) claimed that they had an economic activity, 52.6% of these children being under 14 years old and 47.4% being 14 or over. Most of these children had left

¹ Eurostat defines the poverty threshold as “income corresponding to 60% of the income, translated into an equivalent adult”. The data presented here, however, set the poverty line at 40% of this average income, since this figure is closer to the poverty line adopted by most countries (Barreiros, 1999).

² *Inquérito à caracterização social dos agregados com menores em idade escolar* [Survey of the Social Characterisation of Households with School-Age Children] 1998, Work Group of the Department of Statistics, Employment and Vocational Training of the MTS [Ministry of Labour and Welfare].

school without completing compulsory education, while others worked at the same time as they studied (Table 4).³

Unemployment particularly affects the poorly qualified, over 50% of the unemployed having only the 1st and 2nd cycles of basic education. In parallel to this those who have the lowest levels of education are also the most vulnerable to a low paid, insecure and unstable labour market. Figures in the *Inquérito aos Orçamentos Familiares 1994/95* (Capucha, 1998) [Family Budget Survey] show that low levels of education are associated with the lowest levels of income (those unable to read or write form 37.6% of the first decile of income), the reverse occurring in the highest decile of income (Table 5).⁴

The low level of education and vulnerability as regards the labour market, associated with the insecurity of employment/unemployment, also combine to make individuals highly vulnerable to poverty.

Although a higher rate of schooling has a positive influence on access to employment, Portugal has experienced a new trend of an increase in the number of unemployed graduates, i.e., qualified unemployment. The weight of the graduate population out of the total unemployed amounted to around 14 000 people in 1998, rising to 17.4% in 1999. Some authors have therefore cited the education system and the prolongation of schooling among young people as a factor limiting unemployment and have suggested that “instead of preparing them for life and work, school does not prepare them for unemployment” (Cabral, 1998).

Unemployment in Portugal is also characterised by its regional distribution. Analysis of unemployment rates at this level shows a decrease in all regions throughout the last decade, particularly in the Algarve, Alentejo and Lisboa e Vale do Tejo. Although the decrease in these regions was more marked, they were also the ones with the highest rates of unemployment in the country in 1999, these rates even exceeding the national average (Table 6). The Alentejo and the Algarve, together with the Centre, are the regions in which the incidence of poverty is felt more deeply. Despite the high rate of unemployment the poverty rate in Lisboa e Vale do Tejo is the lowest in the country, and there is therefore no direct relationship between these two variables for this region.

Against this background, poverty in Portugal is the result not so much of exclusion from the labour market but of:

- a highly prevalent informal economy (which at the same time causes unemployment to stagnate), manifested for example by the vulnerability to poverty of the self-employed (with a poverty rate of around 30%);
- the absence of social protection when people do not participate in economic activity, domestic staff being an example with a poverty rate of around 40%, though only 10% of individuals living in poverty form part of this group;
- weak social protection in old-age and unemployment, bearing in mind the high poverty rates among pensioners and the unemployed. There is a clear tendency for a high poverty

³ Resolution of the Council of Ministers 75/98 of 2 July introduced the *Plano para a Eliminação da Exploração do Trabalho Infantil* (PEETI) [Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour], a structure of national scope supervised directly by the *Ministério do Trabalho e da Solidariedade* [Ministry of Labour and Welfare], which aims to eliminate child labour in Portugal. This structure also seeks to prevent early school drop-out and to create a network of public and private organisations to support the educational integration of these children, among other objectives. The *Conselho Nacional Contra a Exploração do Trabalho Infantil* (CNCETI) [National Committee Against Child Labour] was created to support the PEETI.

⁴ The weight of “academic qualifications” should also be noted as a factor explaining the inequalities recorded at national level (27.74% in 1997), which were also influenced by the “level of qualifications” (42.81%) and the sector of activity (15.43%) (Ferreira and Rodrigues, 2000).

rate among the retired (34.8%) and the unemployed (21.0%). As far as the latter group is concerned, although the poor population does not include a very significant number of unemployed, those who are unemployed are highly vulnerable to poverty. A comparison of these figures with the EU15 average shows that the retired and the unemployed are also highly vulnerable to poverty in the European context, although the intensity of this phenomenon in these groups in Portugal is considerably greater than that for the EU15 average;

- a very insecure labour market – illustrated by the reduction in permanent contracts with an accompanying rise in fixed-term contracts; by the rise in the number of workers who work more and less than the normal working hours; and by a very extensive wage range. In 1995 the poverty rate in Portugal was much higher than in the EU15 for the employed population and the self-employed, which illustrates the vulnerability of these groups, although they have paid work. These groups also contain a greater percentage of the poor population (25.7% and 27% respectively) (Tables 7 and 8);
- high inequality in the distribution of wealth, 20% of the poorest households receiving around 6% of income in 1995, while the wealthiest 20% received around 44% (Barreiros, 1999).

1.2. Social policies in Portugal

A society in which high poverty rates are just one form of social exclusion is a context in which the citizenship rights of a significant number of individuals and groups are not being met.

Modern citizenship is built and consolidated around an increasingly broader range of social rights (together with civil and political rights), but the recent crisis and changes affecting the welfare state are manifested in an inability to realise such rights. “Social exclusion as a current phenomenon manifesting this crisis not only demands political action to safeguard social rights, but also its own redefinition or extension: the right to integration as an element for reconstructing citizenship rights” (Pereirinha, coord, 1999).

Against this background social policies play an important role in terms of guaranteeing the establishment and promotion of rights. In their interrelationship with economic policies they condition or determine specific aspects of the formation of mechanisms that influence the phenomenon of social exclusion.

Article 81 of the Portuguese Constitution defines the objectives guiding social policy in Portugal: “a) To promote the improvement in the social and economic welfare and the quality of life of the people, particularly the most disadvantaged, within the framework of a strategy of sustainable development; b) To promote social justice, ensure equality of opportunities and correct inequalities in the distribution of wealth and income by means of fiscal policy”. This principle of equity is reflected in social rights of universal scope in five major areas: employment, vocational training and working conditions, education, health, housing and social protection.

In view of the objectives of this study this analysis will focus on the areas of social protection, employment and training.

1.2.1 Social protection

The current social security scheme as a right secured for all citizens was established in Portugal following the April 1974 Revolution, the state being responsible for “organising, coordinating and subsidising a unified and decentralised social security scheme” that “will protect citizens in sickness, old-age, disability, widowhood and orphanhood, and in unemployment and all other situations of a lack of or reduction in means of subsistence or the capacity to work” (Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, 3rd Revision, 1997, Article 63 (2) and (4)).

It was publication of the Basic Law on Social Security in 1984, however, that secured the principles on which the current scheme is based, particularly important being:

- universality, which presupposes the gradual extension of the scope of personal application of the scheme;
- equality, consisting of the elimination of any discrimination in access to social security rights;
- decentralisation;
- participation, which means involving interested parties in defining, planning and managing the scheme, and in monitoring and assessing it.

The above-mentioned Basic Law also establishes two objectives for the scheme:

- i) protection of workers and their families in situations of lack of or reduction in the capacity to work, or involuntary unemployment and death, and guaranteeing payment of family charges;
- ii) protection of people who are affected by a lack of or reduction in means of subsistence.

The 1984 Basic Law thus provides an integrated view of the two areas comprising social protection: Social Action and Social Security, by means of its general and non-contributory schemes.

The **general scheme** covers the working population and their families and is applied by the award of cash benefits in the event of sickness, maternity, industrial accidents, unemployment, disability, old-age or death. This scheme is mandatory for all employees and the self-employed and is financed by earnings-related contributions from workers and employers.

The **non-contributory scheme** is designed to ensure protection in situations of economic or social hardship not actually covered by the general scheme and is applied by the award of benefits in kind (encompassing in particular the use of social services and facilities) and cash benefits in cases similar to those referred to for the general scheme. Contrary to what occurs in the general scheme, the award of the benefit in this case is means-tested rather than being dependent on the payment of social security contributions. Access to benefits is generally based on the beneficiary earning monthly incomes below 40% of the national minimum wage, or on a family income less than 1.5 times the minimum wage. The scheme is financed exclusively by transfers from the state.

The non-contributory scheme is completed with **Social Action**, which according to the 1984 Basic Law is designed to prevent economic hardship and social inadaptability and marginalisation and at the same time to promote the integration of the people involved. Social

action is therefore designed to protect the most vulnerable groups – particularly children, young people, the elderly and the disabled – inasmuch as the hardships they suffer cannot be overcome by means of the social security schemes referred to previously.

The term “social action” is normally used rather than welfare. This represents a development in conceptual terms which is intended to be reflected in the practice of the services. “From this point of view welfare is reflected in actions of a therapeutic, piecemeal and paternalistic nature. Putting them into action seeks to respond to situations of hardship that affect certain strictly defined groups, without considering the causes and without considering the participation of individuals in solving their own problems. This contrasts with a notion of social action, the objectives of which are to improve the quality of life of people and groups by harmonising social relations. This view of social action is based essentially on notions of promotion (...) and globality” (Cardoso, 1993).

Some authors, however, support a view of welfare in crisis with an attitude of welfare solely for emergency purposes, geared towards overcoming shortcomings and failing to fulfil various aspects of social policy. What they do advocate is a welfare policy clearly related to a broad view of social protection (not only actions), which makes the state and society responsible: Supporting the “specific nature of welfare also results from recognising it as different from other areas of policy, as a potential umbrella for all the dimensions that constitute the human and social needs of living and co-habiting (...). This aspect also separates it from other policies whose scope is generally restricted to a given area of needs. Only the political dimension in welfare could correspond to the content of the exclusions generated in contemporary societies” (Rodrigues, 1999:279).

Social action is applied at two levels:

- the provision of services with direct management of social facilities – particularly crèches, kindergartens, homes for the elderly, young people or the disabled, home help, etc – or with the establishment of agreements with private welfare institutions that ensure such management;
- the award of benefits to a population that visits its information and advisory services. It will be noted that the award of such benefits is totally discretionary, the amounts depending on the sums available in each region at the time, and very often on the subjective assessment made by the social services staff on duty. This way of implementing social action means that, despite the change in terminology, a welfare tradition that considers hardship but is unaware of rights persists.

While the inclusion of social action within the scope of Social Security in the above-mentioned 1984 Basic Law on Social Security was considered to be an important legislative step in consolidating the non-supplementary nature of a state that claims to be committed to the social area, it is certain that until the creation of the *Rendimiento Mínimo Garantido* [Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI)] social action “maintained the (difficult to manage) administration of cash benefits and benefits in kind (...) that were clearly insufficient and that penalised the expectations of the population and the staff responsible for that administration” (Rodrigues, 1999: page 40).

Only at the end of the 1990s with the Minimum Income was a right asserted in connection with social action approximating the rights observed in the Social Security schemes. Creation of the Guaranteed Minimum Income in 1996 corresponds to the only social action benefit that

establishes a limit of income below which everyone has a right to benefits. It is therefore the only automatic right of social action.

The development of expenditure allocated to social action increased between 1995 and 1998 by around 29%. The weight of this expenditure in total Social Security expenditure in 1995 was 5.1%, rising to 5.6% in 1998 (Table 9).

A report from the Oporto *Centro Regional de Segurança Social* [Regional Social Security Office] in the 1990s concludes that the revenue allocated in the General State Budget for social action is insufficient. This is visible not only in the sums for awarding benefits, but also in the shortage of human resources (during the last two decades the recruitment of new technical personnel was virtually “frozen”, giving rise to a gradual ageing of staff) and inadequate resources (lack of vehicles for transporting personnel, lack of a computer system, for example).

In 1997 there were around 331 000 users of social action. According to their profile in terms of per capita family income, around 46% were people whose income was less than 30% of the National Minimum Wage (NMW). This support is furthermore mostly granted to families in need (70%), while around 30% of users were individuals (Table 10).

The characterisation of users according to the type of problems that caused them to use social action highlights two fundamental types of problem: insufficiency of resources (between 32% and 35%, according to whether isolated individuals or families respectively are concerned), followed by sickness/disability (between 20% and 24%). This shows that throughout the last decade the demand for support at the level of social action largely arose due to lack of income, which to some extent demonstrates that this population continues to be affected by poverty (in terms of lack of resources) (Table 11).

The economic difficulties of users, associated with a multiplicity of other social and individual problems and the inadequacy of the support provided has led to the creation of dependency that is reflected in the existence of “families in chronic need of” welfare.

1.2.2. The actors

Both employment and social protection policies, including social action, are currently overseen by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare. Matters related to employment and social security were combined in 1998, after a period between 1995 and 1998 in which they were separated in two different ministries⁵.

In terms of employment and training policies the *Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional* (IEFP) [Institute for Employment and Vocational Training] played a particularly important role. This Institute was created in 1979 and is responsible for implementing the Ministry’s policy measures. It was decentralised by means of the establishment of local *Centros de Emprego* [Job Centres], with their own autonomous management.

The IEFP has a tripartite management formed by representatives of the public administration and trade union and employers’ organisations. Its services are decentralised and organised in five regional branches located in the five major geographical regions of the country.

⁵ During this period employment matters were overseen by the *Ministério para a Qualificação e o Emprego*, [Ministry for Qualifications and Employment], while social security was the responsibility of the *Ministério da Solidariedade e da Segurança Social* [Ministry of Welfare and Social Security].

In terms of social protection the *Direcção-Geral dos Regimes de Segurança Social* [Directorate General for Social Security Schemes] has a merely administrative function and is responsible for awarding and paying contributory and non-contributory benefits, while the *Direcção-Geral da Acção Social* [Directorate General for Social Action] was created in 1991 by the new Act establishing the then *Ministério do Emprego e da Segurança Social* [Ministry of Employment and Social Security].

The creation of this Directorate General in the early 1990s reflected the government's intention to improve coordination in the public services that provide social action. Regional Social Security Offices (five offices corresponding to the territorial units of the country) were also created at the beginning of the decade as part of decentralisation, with some regional services. The Regional Social Security Offices are responsible for negotiating agreements with private institutions. They also have an information and advisory service in the area of the Schemes - information on social benefits, receipt of claims, etc - and in the area of social action with the so-called family reception services, which in addition to dealing with families also provide guidance and support. It is these social action services, which are decentralised at municipality level, that carry out work connected to the Guaranteed Minimum Income.

The policy changes corresponding to the change in government in the 1990s, which allowed the Guaranteed Minimum Income to be applied, led to the creation of the *Instituto para o Desenvolvimento Social* [Institute for Social Development], which besides managing this new measure began to take on responsibilities that had previously been the responsibility of the Directorate General for Social Action.

This Institute seeks to mobilise and manage social development, anti-poverty and social exclusion policies, and also to support the partnerships being created throughout the country, ensuring technical support for the development of Social Networks. In coordination with Regional Social Security Offices it is also responsible for promoting the variety of programmes aimed at the different population groups, particularly the elderly, children and young people⁶.

Two new bodies were also created following the recent changes in the new Act implementing the Ministry of Labour and Welfare (Decree Law 45-A/2000 of 22 March): the *Instituto de Solidariedade e Segurança Social* [Institute of Welfare and Social Security], which will bring together the Regional Social Security Offices and the *Centro Nacional de Pensões* [National Pensions Office]; and the *Direcção-Geral da Solidariedade e Segurança Social* [Directorate General for Welfare and Social Security], as a result of the merger of the Directorate General for Social Security Schemes and the Directorate General for Social Action.

This new basic structure is justified by the need to adapt the Welfare and Social Security scheme to the new challenges it faces, particularly in order to raise the quality of services provided to citizens by tailoring public responses more closely to their problems.

Clearly the impact of these changes can only be assessed in a subsequent phase. Some concern has in any event arisen regarding the integration of social action into the schemes in the same Directorate General, a structure that had already been tried out and which then represented an undervaluation of social action in relation to a sector with a more bureaucratic-administrative nature.

⁶ These are just some of the objectives or responsibilities attributed to the Institute for Social Development, whose field of action is extremely broad.

The social partners have participated in designing and implementing the social policies largely within the *Conselho Económico e Social* [Economic and Social Council]. The Council was created in 1991 and has been operating since 1992, and is composed of “representatives of the government, trade union organisations, economic activities and families, the Autonomous Regions and the local authorities” (Portuguese Constitution, Art. 92 (2)).

Within the scope of this Council, particularly in the *Comissão Permanente de Concertação Social* [Standing Committee for Social Consensus], various agreements have been signed with a significant impact on the way social policy has been conducted in some fields, notably in employment and vocational training through the Vocational Training Policy Agreement of July 1991, the Socio-Economic Agreement for Development and Employment, and more recently the Cooperation Agreement for Welfare.

The Cooperation Agreement for Welfare is defined as an instrument designed to create the conditions for developing a cooperation strategy between the *Instituições Particulares de Solidariedade Social* (IPSS) [Private Welfare Institutions], the central state and the local administration. It is an agreement that recognises the role of private institutions and simultaneously seeks to reinforce their coordination and partnership with the various state bodies.

These institutions do in fact have a high profile in terms of social action. Established as non-profit-making bodies, the IPSS have been recognised by the state through their registration with the Directorate General for Social Action, benefiting from automatic recognition as public utilities and enjoying access to a range of allowances, particularly of a fiscal nature.

The development in the number of IPSS registered with the Directorate General for Social Action in the last decade illustrates their growing importance in Portuguese society, over 1 057 IPSS being registered between 1990 and 1996.

A very important form of coordination between the IPSS and the state takes place by means of agreements signed by the Regional Social Security Offices in connection with social action. These agreements can be of two types:

- cooperation agreements, the aim of which is to pursue actions to support the most vulnerable groups and to prevent and correct hardship and promote communities and their social development;
- management agreements, which are designed to entrust the management of premises, social services and facilities to the institutions.

The state financially supports the IPSS in return for the services provided and is also responsible for regulating their activities. Out of total expenditure on social action, 15.2% is used to award allowances to the IPSS with cooperation agreements with the Social Security, much of this financing being channelled towards children and young people (54.8%) and the elderly (44.1%) (Table 12).

The local authorities (local power) have been called upon to play an increasingly important role in social policies as part of a process of expanding decentralisation and institutional cooperation, both with the central administration and the private institutions, as regulated in the Cooperation Agreement for Welfare.

Two of the areas in which such cooperation is more clearly defined are educational social action (such as the award of grants and free school meals for the most disadvantaged pupils)

and council housing (the municipality being responsible for promoting the construction of and allocating council housing).

Despite all this it has been said that the current local authority capacity in the social sphere in Portugal boils down to two essential aspects: municipal duties in this area “constitute a range of residual and supplementary powers; municipal participation in administering policies at local level reserves a consultative and subordinate role for the municipalities” (Branco, 1996; 188).

Municipal social policies have above all essentially been facilities policies. Besides the already mentioned areas of educational social action and council housing, services are only provided on an ad hoc and optional basis. Thus at the level of combating poverty they are not formally given powers. However, the central political-legal lack of definition, associated with local pressure – failure to satisfy needs is expressed locally – “means that the municipal space in different cases becomes a stage for multiple diverse scenarios as regards the intensity and means of involvement in the field of local social action” (Ruivo, 2000:24), a “Parallel State” coming into being (cf. Santos, 1991:19).

Some municipalities (such as Matosinhos and Ferreira do Alentejo) have thus taken the initiative of designing and implementing local development projects to combat poverty. Meanwhile, with the creation of the Guaranteed Minimum Income, some local authorities have promoted pilot projects in the experimental phase of the measure.

Some practical amendments in connection with a legislative void in the role of the municipalities in defining and implementing social policies may have been introduced by the recent Resolution of the Council of Ministers 197/97, which created the “Social Networks - as a range of different forms of mutual assistance and of private non-profit-making and public agencies that work in the field of social action and which coordinate their activities among themselves and with the Government with a view to eradicating or attenuating poverty and social exclusion and promoting social development” - with their respective *Conselhos Locais de Acção Social* [Local Social Action Committees - LSAC], chaired by the chairperson of the Municipal Council, thereby invigorating their response to the issue.

2. Analysis of some measures

2.1. Social benefits in unemployment

The social protection system for unemployment (Decree Law 119/99 of 14 April) is designed “to protect” social security beneficiaries against involuntary unemployment (falling within the area of the schemes, more specifically the General Social Security Scheme), through the payment of an unemployment benefit. This benefit may take different forms according to the characteristics of the beneficiaries concerned: *subsídio de desemprego* (SD) [unemployment benefit], *subsídio social de desemprego* (SSD) [supplementary unemployment benefit] (prior or subsequent to the SD) and *subsídio parcial de desemprego* (SPD) [partial unemployment benefit].

The award of these benefits is designed to compensate the beneficiary for a lack of remuneration (scarcity of monetary resources) or for a reduction in remuneration due to the

fact that they have agreed to work part-time, and it also has the objective of promoting the creation of employment. The people covered by these benefits must live in national territory.

A range of requirements applying to all these allowances must be met in order to benefit from them: beneficiaries must have been bound by a contract of employment or its equivalent, or in the case of domestic service they must have had effective earnings as the basis for contributions; they must not have any type of employment; they must be involuntarily unemployed; they must be able and available to work; and they must also be registered at the Job Centre. It is also essential for the individual to have completed the guaranteed period, which means having worked 540 or 180 days, with a record of earnings in the 24 or 12 months immediately prior to their unemployment, depending on whether it is a case of unemployment benefit or supplementary unemployment benefit respectively.

The general conditions for awarding these allowances are combined with a range of specific conditions associated with supplementary and partial unemployment benefit. In the case of the former the award of the benefit depends on whether the beneficiary has or has not completed the guaranteed period required for receiving unemployment benefit, or if the period for granting the benefit has elapsed. The beneficiary's household must also not have a monthly per capita income greater than 80% of the National Minimum Wage (NMW)⁷. A further condition for the award of partial unemployment benefit is that the individual is receiving unemployment benefit and enters into a part-time contract of employment, the value of their earnings being lower than the amount of the unemployment benefit.

Specific conditions also apply in relation to the amount and period of administering the benefit, according to the type of allowance. The unemployment benefit is equivalent to 65% of the reference remuneration⁸, calculated on the basis of 30 days per month up to a maximum of three times the NMW, the minimum limits being equivalent to an NMW or the average remuneration if the latter is less than that wage. The amount of the supplementary unemployment benefit is calculated with reference to the NMW. The value of 80% and 100% of the NMW respectively is considered if individual beneficiaries or beneficiaries in a household are concerned. In both cases the amount of the benefit is based on R/180, considering holiday pay and the Christmas bonus.

The amount of the partial unemployment benefit is based on calculating the difference between the value of the unemployment benefit plus 25% of this value and the part-time worker's actual remuneration⁹.

The period for granting these three benefits is established according to the age of the beneficiary on the date of claiming them, as shown in Table 13.

Throughout the second half of the 1990s there was a fall in the amounts attributed to unemployment protection, with a decrease of 3.1% from 1996 to 1997 and of around 1.4% between 1997 and 1998. The relative weight of the "unemployment benefits" component in total Social Security expenditure also fell in this period (Tables 14 and 15).

The intensity of this reduction differs when the unemployment benefit and the supplementary unemployment benefit are analysed separately. While the reduction in the unemployment benefit was around 2.2% in 1998 (compared to 3.1% in 1997), the supplementary

⁷ The value of the National Minimum Wage for the year 2000 is PTE 63 800 (EURO 318,23).

⁸ Reference value (R) = remuneration recorded in the last 12 calendar months preceding the second month prior to the date of unemployment.

⁹ Formula for calculating the benefit – SPD = (SD+25%)(rtp), where rtp = remuneration for part-time work.

unemployment benefit increased by around 0.5% in 1998 (having fallen by 3% in 1997) (Graph 1).

In the same period of analysis this fall in expenditure on unemployment benefits was accompanied by a 2.4% fall in the number of beneficiaries (though there was a slight increase in this number between 1995 and 1996), with a fall of around 6% in the case of the unemployment benefit and an increase of around 2% in supplementary unemployment benefit. The increase in the number of beneficiaries of supplementary unemployment benefit could be due in part to the increase in insecure forms of employment, particularly in the number of workers with fixed-term contracts during this period, increasing vulnerability to unemployment, but the duration of which does not qualify them for unemployment benefit since they do not have the necessary guaranteed period or sufficient working time (Table 16).

This overall reduction in the number of beneficiaries and the total rate of unemployment led to a reduction in total expenditure on these benefits.

An analysis of these two dimensions shows that the average monthly unemployment benefit (88 000 escudos in 1998) has developed positively since 1995 (though less intensely in the last year under analysis), while the average supplementary unemployment benefit fell by 1.6% in the same year, partly due to the more than proportional increase in the number of beneficiaries of this allowance in relation to the development of expenditure.

The rate of coverage of unemployment benefits improved in 1998 after several consecutive years in which it deteriorated. Despite this development, 60% of the unemployed in Portugal at that time had no protection of any kind (Graph 2).

2.2. The Guaranteed Minimum Income

Of the active social policies mentioned, this study will focus on the recently created Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) because:

- it is the only means-tested social action measure;
- it covers a working-age population above all;
- it associates the award of the cash benefit (the responsibility of the Social Security) with an integration programme intended to make the individual independent;
- it stimulates integration into the labour market as a fundamental factor of independence;
- it creates structures for local coordination and liaison between different bodies;
- it gives rise to new measures that can be used as resources for integration.

The introduction of the minimum income falls within the context analysed above, in which measures capable of responding to serious problems of low income in disadvantaged families are necessary, seeking to combine various types of response.

The need for effective responses capable of directly supporting the income of individuals and/or families, promoting their occupational and social qualifications, stimulating and providing them with the opportunity for direct participation in society and giving them a spirit of citizenship, led to the construction of a new key instrument in combating extreme deprivation and the most serious forms of social exclusion – the Guaranteed Minimum Income. This involves establishing a minimum level of earnings that guarantees all citizens a dignified life as a right to which they are entitled.

In addition to the already mentioned satisfaction of minimum needs the philosophy underlying the GMI is independence, seeking to reverse situations of dependency on social services.

This measure was a priority in the programme of the XIII Constitutional Government as part of a “new period” in the development of social policies, to some extent abandoning a more welfare-based approach and attempting to counter the tendency towards “benefit dependency” on the part of the disadvantaged population. The new challenge arising at the level of social action was to make individuals, the different institutions and society as a whole jointly responsible for executing a range of participatory activation measures in which each actor makes certain commitments to cooperate so as to define an integration pathway.

This measure therefore requires national solidarity, since the award of the cash benefit is independent of the beneficiary’s contribution record and thus falls within the non-contributory Social Security scheme.

“The definition of the GMI as a non-contributory Social Security scheme benefit arises from recognition that the right to a cash benefit which helps guarantee a minimum level of subsistence for all citizens and an understanding of the social security system in which the non-contributory scheme is a fundamental pillar should be embodied in the context of the social security system, since it includes all the measures derived not from an insurance approach but from an approach of vertical redistribution of resources and welfare...” (Santos et al, 1997).

This measure has increased in importance since it was implemented, and in 1999 Social Security expenditure on this measure amounted to some 48 billion escudos (Tables 17 and 18).

2.2.1. Legal context

Act 19-A/96 of 29 June created the Guaranteed Minimum Income as a right supplementing rather than replacing those that were already secured in the Constitution.

As stated previously, this new measure is intended “*to provide individuals and their households with resources to help them meet their minimum needs and promote their gradual social and occupational integration*”; it is temporary in nature and the amount of the cash benefit varies according to the economic and family situation of the claimant. Taking the individual to be an integral part of the household, it allows the value of the benefit to be calculated on the basis of the income of the household as a whole (calculation of the benefit will be dealt with below).

The innovation of this measure, forming part of the range of social protection measures, lies in the combination of access for Guaranteed Minimum Income recipients to a cash benefit together with access to an array of measures with a view among other things to: integration into the labour market; (re-)entry into the education system; access to vocational training.

It is also a subsidiary measure in relation to other Social Security benefits, which means that beneficiaries first have to claim those other benefits. They may only take advantage of the Guaranteed Minimum Income when they have exhausted the possibilities of access to benefits such as unemployment and incapacity benefit, for example. In other words, “the principle of subsidiarity means that in principle only those who do not receive other social benefits receive guaranteed income benefits” (Guibentif; 1997). The GMI can meanwhile take the form of a

benefit supplementing other Social Security benefits; in these cases the GMI will therefore cover the difference between the amount of the benefit, for example the unemployment benefit, and the value of the old-age pension.

In order to analyse the Guaranteed Minimum Income in Portugal some basic concepts must be clarified, notably what is meant by recipient and beneficiaries of the measure.

The recipient means the individual to whom the GMI benefit is awarded, the beneficiaries being all the members of the recipient's household. Claimants are all individuals, irrespective of their socio-economic conditions, who claim the GMI.

2.2.2. Conditions of eligibility

The Portuguese legal framework of the GMI lists a range of selection criteria for potential beneficiaries of this measure, and according to Pierre Guibentif these can be divided into personal conditions (nationality, residence and age), condition of resources and availability to accept employment.

This measure applies to all citizens, whether nationals or not, who are legally resident in Portugal, an immigrant who does not have Portuguese nationality being eligible for the GMI provided their residential circumstances are legally in order. The latter condition (legal residence in the country) could to some extent form a barrier such that the homeless, for example, living in a situation of extreme poverty and social exclusion, were automatically denied access to the measure. However, both the Decree Law that regulates the implementation of the measure and the *Comissões Locais de Acompanhamento* themselves [LSCs - Local Support Committees] (to be presented later in this report) acknowledge that in the case of the homeless a body designated for this purpose by the LSC should be given as the legal residence¹⁰.

The age of potential beneficiaries is an additional requirement regarding personal circumstances: they must be at least 18, with the exception of young people under 18 who have reached majority by marriage, who have other minors who are solely dependent upon them economically, or who are pregnant..

These conditions as a whole also include conditions for awarding the benefit according to the household of the recipient, taking account of “*adults who share the household economy¹¹ with the recipient, or who are economically dependent upon them¹² or upon the household of which the latter forms part*”.

A further feature of this benefit is that the amount awarded differs according to the resources /income available to the claimant, bearing in mind the income of the spouse or partner and the other members of the household.

Finally, they must be actively available for social reintegration and occupational (re)integration, which will be applied by signing up for an integration programme to be implemented either through the labour market or through vocational training, among others.

¹⁰ Although the homeless have been included in the group of GMI beneficiaries, other groups whose presence in Portugal is significant to some extent remain unprotected, such as illegal immigrants.

¹¹ People who live under the same roof as the benefit claimant are taken to share the household economy with them.

¹² In the terms of this Act “exclusive economic dependence” means minors who share the household economy with the recipient or adults who do not earn income greater than 70% of the value of the old-age pension.

2.2.3. Basis for calculating the benefit

The amount of the benefit is indexed to the value of the old-age pension¹³ (value updated annually on the basis of the consumer price index), which for this year is PTE 25 000 (EURO 124.7).

As mentioned above, this indexing seeks to encompass those who were previously not covered by other social policy measures and may even supplement those measures.

Variables such as the income of the household and its size are taken into account in calculating the amount of the benefit. The proportion to be covered by the Guaranteed Minimum Income therefore corresponds to the difference between the total income of the recipient's household, irrespective of its nature and source, and the total value of the benefit the latter would be entitled to according to the composition of their household. Out of total income, housing benefit, family allowances, student grants and 20% of net income from training grants and from carrying on a professional activity (after all deductions) are ignored in setting the value of the benefit. The great novelty of the GMI, operating as an active measure encouraging integration into the labour market, is the fact that it only considers 50% of earned income in calculating the benefit in the first year it is awarded, when the activity begins during that period.

The value of the minimum income therefore varies according to the composition of the claimant's household:

- 100% of the amount of the old-age pension is awarded for each adult up to the second;
- 70% of the amount of the old-age pension is awarded for each adult from the third;
- 50% of the amount of the old-age pension is awarded for each minor.

Example of calculation of the benefit:

HOUSEHOLD	VERIFICATION OF SERIOUS SITUATION OF HARDSHIP	
	Min. Inc. calculated with reference to value of old-age pension. Value of old-age pension in 2000 is PTE 25 000.	INCOME
Claimant + Spouse + 3 underage children	PTE 25 000 x 100% PTE 25 000 x 100% PTE 25 000 x 50% x 3	PTE 33 000 (unemployment benefit) PTE 17 600 (corresponds to 80% of PTE 22 000 of training grant) Without income
	Total = PTE 87 500	Total = PTE 50 600
CASH BENEFIT: 87 500 – 50 600 = PTE 36 900		

¹³ The value of the old-age pension (PTE 25 000) falls below the value set for the poverty line and therefore shows that the GMI only covers extremely deprived people on very low incomes. This basic amount is mandatory and cannot be adjusted in line with the socio-economic situation of the claimant.

Where calculation of the benefit leads to an amount below 5% of the value established for the non-contributory Social Security scheme old-age pension, the amount to be granted through the GMI will be equal to the value of 5%.

The basic value and variations in the benefit according to the size and income of the household are set nationally, with only one variation in regional terms for the Autonomous Region of Madeira, the value of the benefit being increased by 2%, corresponding to the island weighting.

The amount of the benefit may be supplemented by other potential allowances - supplementary benefits - awarded within the framework of the GMI to offset expenditure on housing for the household whenever such expenditure is greater than 25% of the amount of the GMI, up to a maximum equal to the highest amount of the rent allowance fixed for a household of the same size. This allowance is not cumulative with the legally-defined rent allowance.

Other monetary compensation may also be awarded where the situation of severe hardship influences the integration programme itself, particularly in cases involving health (related to stomatological problems and payment by the state of subsidised charges for health care and medicines, for example), and housing (correction of the payment of debts for water, electricity bills etc., provided the beneficiary shows they are willing to legalise their situation and subsequently pay accounts systematically), among other occasional cases.

The fact that the benefit is indexed to the value of the old-age pension defuses criticisms suggesting that “benefit dependency” occurs which encourages exploitation or demotivation, since this value is very low and preparation of the integration programme is mandatory. “In present circumstances, furthermore, the GMI (and the old-age pension) is below the values considered for defining relative poverty lines in Portuguese society. In the social conditions existing in Portugal it is not only budget constraints that restrict the possibility of growth of the cash value of the benefit.. Due to wage restraint in the country, our benefit has in addition a significant value in comparative terms when measured in the number of hours of work it replaces, and its growth without a corollary growth in wage levels could lead to a transfer to social policy of a level of benefit that should be ensured in the labour market, exacerbating the risk of a “poverty trap” that these measures always involve” (Pedroso, 1997: 106-7).

The benefit is paid monthly by the Social Security (area of the Social Security schemes) under the responsibility of the Regional Social Security Office of the place of residence of the respective recipient. The benefits are payable for one year, with the possibility of automatic renewal provided the beneficiary complies with all necessary formalities and the criteria listed previously continue to be met, particularly legal residence in Portugal and the beneficiary or household not receiving income in excess of the limits stipulated, etc..

The declarations made by claimants are checked when the claim is made. Claimants must present all the documentation attesting to their economic situation, and if documents allowing the situation to be confirmed do not exist the state trusts the citizen (another major innovation of the measure) and accepts their declarations. Income is verified either on awarding the benefit or subsequently, and according to the conclusions reached from this process the value of the benefit may be reassessed or even suspended if there are definite objective indications that the claimant has undeclared sources of income. According to Article 14 of the Decree Law that created the GMI, “minimum income benefits which have been unduly paid shall be

recovered”, taking a benefit which has been unduly paid to mean one which has resulted from false declarations or the omission of declarations required according to the law.

2.2.4. Integration programme and establishment of contracts

Rather than solving the problems of severe socio-economic hardship suffered by beneficiaries, this measure is intended to form a gateway and to some extent an incentive or stimulus for such people to begin their pathway to integration.

According to Article 3 of the Decree Law that created the Guaranteed Minimum Income, “the integration programme is the range of actions whose principles are defined by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security and the *Ministério para a Qualificação e o Emprego* [Ministry for Qualifications and Employment]¹⁴, accepted locally by agreement between the local support committees provided for in this Act, hereinafter referred to as the LSC, and recipients entitled to this benefit with a view to creating conditions for the gradual social integration of the latter and other members of their household.”

First of all the concept of integration within the framework of the Guaranteed Minimum Income must be defined as the process that allows the individual to integrate into the social environment, allowing them to exercise social rights with the aim of achieving social and economic independence. Integration involves an active social policy approach with a view to defining socio-economic integration strategies for beneficiaries. This should be seen as a very broad and comprehensive process covering a range of areas which, rather than focusing solely on employment, also include other activation policies with a view to tackling poverty and social exclusion, particularly vocational training, health, education and housing, i.e., areas leading to the full integration of the individual/household into the environment they are part of.

While this scenario is not unprecedented in social action in Portugal, it now has a new dimension and is more widespread and legitimate. The introduction of the integration programme “shifts the centre of gravity of the financial assistance action to ‘development tasks’ based on the search for new forms of coordination between the economic and social dimensions, within the framework of the regional communities” (Branco, 1999:71).

The introduction of the integration programme also involves establishing contracts between the citizen-beneficiary and society. Although measures of this type already exist as part of traditional social action, they have so far been ad hoc and informal. The contract binds the citizen and society, and brings the right and the duty together on the same platform, “a right based on recognising the principle that citizens-beneficiaries of the GMI are excluded from social opportunities and have the right to be afforded such opportunities” (Santos et al, 1997).

In view of the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon of social exclusion the integration programme should be designed to cover various dimensions, coordinating social, economic, family and individual aspects applied in fields such as education, social work, vocational training, employment, and health, among others.

Article 11 (4) of Decree Law 19-A/96 establishes the obligations of the beneficiary: “a) Acceptance of work or vocational training; b) Involvement in the education system; c) Participation in temporary jobs that favour integration into the labour market or that satisfy

¹⁴ It should be noted that in the XIV Constitutional Government the ministerial structure was altered, the measure then coming under the Ministry of Employment and Welfare.

social or environmental needs and that would not normally be pursued within the framework of organised work; d) The implementation of actions designed to develop the social independence of the recipient of the minimum income benefit and the other members of their household.”

The integration programme should include the support that will be granted and the bodies that will be held responsible for promoting it, the different obligatory partners playing a very important role in accomplishing the actions proposed.

The integration agreement should be defined prior to the preparation of a social report (the responsibility of a staff member of a body to be appointed by the local support committees) containing information on the socio-economic characterisation of the individual and their household, such as: identification of the main problems inhibiting the social and economic independence of beneficiaries; identification of the potential and skills of members of the household; the technical opinion of the person responsible for preparing the report; and finally the integration programme, which records the actions to be carried out by the beneficiaries, prepared with their active participation, and the conditions of subscribing to the programme.

It should also contain the objectives the process intends to achieve in relation to each member of the household, following which the integration agreement to be signed by the recipient of the benefit and by the individuals who will form part of the respective household is formalised.

A range of undertaking/obligations which must be respected by the beneficiaries and the support to be given by the staff (bodies on the LSC) are thereby defined. This process therefore requires close joint coordination between the LSC and the beneficiary with a view to preparing a personalised programme in line with the needs and resources of both parties involved. The development of the integration programme must be supported technically so as to promote the independence of the individual and the household as a whole.

The process of supporting the actions taken by beneficiaries during their integration process (which is laid down by law) is carried out continuously throughout the integration period by a staff member appointed by the LSC, ensuring monitoring and assessment, and the integration agreement may be renegotiated with the beneficiary if it is unsuitable or needs to be amended.

This whole process is legally mandatory, one of the conditions allowing the individual to gain access to the benefit being that they must be available to start an integration programme. If the integration agreement is not fulfilled for reasons attributed to the recipient the benefit has to be terminated. If it is not fulfilled due to the fault of any members of the household the member concerned will be excluded in calculating the benefit.

2.2.5. Implementation of the measure

The above-mentioned statute was only to be applied finally in 1997, the date the Decree Law actually came into force. Until then the Guaranteed Minimum Income was an experimental measure applied to a restricted range of potential beneficiaries and differentiated on a territorial basis by means of pilot projects.

This was therefore a first experimental stage when the viability and consistency of the measure were tested so that it could be accompanied by the gradual strengthening of the structures and resources available to make it more effective in the future in achieving its objectives.

In addition to preparing the application of the Guaranteed Minimum Income, these projects were also intended to test the participatory management models put in place in local partnerships (LSCs).

In the second stage the measure was extended throughout national territory, giving all citizens who met the conditions referred to above the possibility of obtaining it.

The implementation of the measure is based on a philosophy of work in partnership. Such partnership requires the direct involvement of the state, local partners, local power and welfare institutions which come together to increase resources and pool efforts so as to find responses to the problems of poverty and social exclusion.

The creation of a body such as the *Comissão Nacional do Rendimento Mínimo* [National Commission on the Minimum Income] reflects the need and the importance attributed to work in partnership, i.e., sectoral coordination between the various ministries with specific responsibilities in defining and implementing measures to meet the needs of individuals. The composition of the Local Support Committees also reflects this concern for coordination between the various partners (whether obligatory or not).

Although it provides clear advantages in terms of executing the measure, this form of operating is highly complex, since it requires great coordination between structures and institutions that work in such distinct fields. This coordination should be horizontal in terms of relations between the different ministries - an intersectoral relationship - and vertical so as to vitalise relations between the state, local institutions and all those involved in constructing the integration processes and implementing the measure.

It is therefore a national measure, managed and implemented territorially at municipal level (the LSC is municipality-based), thereby fostering decentralised decision-making, trying to abolish the bureaucracy of the whole process and allowing the staff who work on the ground directly with the target population some degree of independence in decision-making.

2.2.6. Beneficiaries

Having described the principles underlying the measure the beneficiaries of the Guaranteed Minimum Income must now be characterised.

The information available refers to the last report prepared by the Institute for Social Development, dated October 1999. As stated, this Institute manages the GMI.

From the introduction of the Guaranteed Minimum Income until October 1999¹⁵ 327 905 claims were received, 55.3% of which were accepted and 33.0% rejected. 11.7% of claims are currently being assessed.

A regional analysis of the geographic distribution of the claims received, analysed and accepted shows that they are more numerous in the North and Lisboa e Vale do Tejo. These are also the regions with the greatest concentration of poor individuals and households (around 29% and 34% respectively in 1994), although the incidence of poverty is slightly lower here than in mainland Portugal as a whole and although it has a greater number of institutional resources.

¹⁵ According to data compiled in the October 1999 Implementation Report of the Measure and Characterisation of Beneficiaries.

A national analysis shows that 143 360 recipients currently receive the cash benefit, corresponding to a total of 427 461 beneficiaries, which is equivalent to 4.3% of the total national resident population (out of a total of 23.9% of the population who are below the poverty line).

Also at this level the greatest number of beneficiaries (37.5%) are located in the North (with 5.3% of the resident population receiving the benefit), followed by Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, in which 21.6% of beneficiaries are located (Tables 19 and 20).

Women are the most active in applying for this benefit (as is traditional in social action), representing around 68% of all recipients and corresponding to 1.31% of the population resident in national territory. Men represent only 32% of recipients, or 0.67% of the resident population. This trend is mirrored in all seven regions considered and is maintained when beneficiaries as a whole are used as the analysis variable.

One of the factors that may underlie this gender-based differentiation is related to the fact that many of the households represented by these recipients are lone-parent families headed by a woman. This shows that women are more vulnerable to situations of low income and social protection, which is reflected in greater demand for the supplementary resources this measure provides, as well as other social support (Table 21).

The characterisation of beneficiaries in terms of types of household also shows that, together with lone-parent families headed by women, family structures composed only of a woman living alone also make up a significant proportion of total households benefiting from the Guaranteed Minimum Income (14.6%).

Nationally the nuclear family with children is the most common type of family represented among beneficiaries, with some 36.4% of the total.

In terms of age structure, beneficiaries mostly fall within the youngest age groups, particularly the under 18s, which is explained by the fact that beneficiaries of the measure rather than recipients are considered, the latter being included in the benefit claimant's household.

This population group is therefore highly vulnerable to poverty, very often associated with unemployment, low levels of schooling, low vocational qualifications and sometimes drug addiction problems, among many others leading to increased insecurity in living conditions.

A residual number of beneficiaries are found in the over 65 years of age group, since this population is allowed access to another type of benefits subsidiary to the GMI, particularly the old-age pension. It also has a residual value for the lowest age groups, arising out of the conditions of access to the benefit (age).

The age characterisation of recipients of the Minimum Income therefore shows that they fall mainly within the 25 to 44 years of age group (Tables 22 and 23).

It is also important to assess the actual accomplishment of the integration programmes, based on the number of individuals who have attended integration action and on identifying the priority areas for this purpose.

157 184 Guaranteed Minimum Income beneficiaries are involved in integration processes, distributed among the different areas. Social action involves the greatest number of beneficiaries, representing 31.6% of total integration programmes defined. This is followed by health (24%), education (17.9%), and employment, with 12.6% of total integration programmes, followed by housing and vocational training with lower percentages (Table 24).

A series of situations is defined in the law in which the need to be actively available for work is waived (i.e., which allows the social integration process to be achieved temporarily or permanently without vocational integration): for health reasons, people who are suffering from prolonged illness or disability, confirmed by a medical declaration; for reasons of age, people under 16 and over 65 years of age; for family reasons, people who are providing essential support for members of their household.

Chapter 2. Active policies and the Guaranteed Minimum Income

1. Active social policies in Portugal

According to official documents, active social policies are considered to be “the new generation” of social policies in Portugal.

They are defined as measures capable of generating and supporting ways of developing each citizen and making them independent. To quote an official text (Ministry of Labour and Welfare, *Políticas Sociais Activas em Portugal [Active Social Policies in Portugal]*, February 2000), “Active social policies, seeking to act on the causes of problems and seeking to create conditions for transforming the environment and individual attitudes, represent support for the actions referred to and the condition for sustaining them.

This diversified range of measures and programmes with such varied spheres of action has certain basic principles in common that provide consistency and coherence.

It should first be pointed out that they promote a concept of citizenship that can be extended to all individuals and that embodies the right to work and the right to a minimum income, but also the full exercise of civil rights, culture, education and participation in social life in general by the integration communities, from the family to the most varied social groups, in short, full integration into life in society.

Secondly, they are all based on recognition of the importance of equality of opportunities as a way of combating inequalities and social fragmentation (...).

Finally they all adopt an approach of mobilising and making society as a whole and each citizen responsible in the effort to eradicate poverty and exclusion. This approach is reflected in the involvement of the most varied bodies, such as state services, the local authorities, non-profit-making organisations and simple groups of citizens in partnership and working in networks, which increasingly represents a pooling of efforts and wills, in association with an extended sharing of responsibilities”.

Following on from this view, active measures are not only and exclusively those which encourage integration into the labour market but also, bearing in mind a process of making individuals independent, those which involve acting in other fields of vulnerability such as those already referred to: education, health, social participation, etc..

Underlying the definition of these measures is a concept of exclusion as the non-satisfaction of citizenship rights, social policies playing a fundamental role in guaranteeing these rights for all citizens. Meanwhile the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon is presupposed, thus involving action in various fields rather than at the level of income alone.

In theory this notion also involves a concept of exclusion as a social phenomenon, i.e., as something governed by the way contemporary societies function, and combating it should therefore involve not only the individuals affected but also the social structures themselves.

Excluding active employment policies, the following are some of the active social measures, bearing their target population in mind:

- **GMI** – developed in point 3.1.

- **Anti-Poverty Projects** – “(...) *their basic objective is to promote, implement and support projects that seek to minimise the imbalances and economic and social inequalities which affect the most disadvantaged populations*”, seeking to foster the participation of institutions from the public or the private sector, making community groups and local partnerships responsible in seeking integrated responses for solving social problems. These projects cover all national territory and are aimed at families and the elderly experiencing economic hardship, children and young people with difficulties in integrating socially, lone-parent families, children and women at risk, drug addicts, the disabled, ethnic minorities and local impoverished communities. The bodies responsible for managing and coordinating this active social measure are the *Comissariados Regionais do Norte e do Sul de Luta Contra a Pobreza* [North and South Regional Anti-Poverty Offices].
- **Training, Employment and Social Development OP** – programme forming part of CSF III, which seeks to promote social development (SUB OP 4 – Promotion of Social Development), focusing on three strategic lines: “*preventive measures against the phenomenon of unemployment, early responses to problems of unemployment and measures facilitating the social integration of sectors exposed to long-term unemployment*”. Pursuit of the objectives of the SUB OP is ensured by three measures. Measure 1 – Support for Social Development (implementation of the Social Network for developing and supporting socially useful activities); Measure 2 – Promoting a Labour Market Open to All; Measure 3 – Developing the Network of Facilities and Services Promoting Social Development. The principal target population of this programme are people who find it difficult to integrate or who are excluded or at risk of exclusion from the labour market, and agents of social development. This programme is run by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare.
- **INTEGRAR Operational Programme**
 - Measure 1 - Support for Social Development;
 - Measure 2 - Socio-Economic Integration of the Adult Long-Term Unemployed;
 - Measure 3 - Socio-Economic Integration of the Disabled;
 - Measure 4 - Socio-Economic Integration of the Least Privileged Groups;
 - Measure 5 - Construction and Adaptation of Infrastructures and Facilities to Support the Socio-Economic Integration of the Least Privileged Groups.

The INTEGRAR subprogramme seeks to promote the economic and social integration of the least privileged groups of the population and forms part of CSF II. This is one of the instruments whose priority is to combat social exclusion in Portugal.
- **Social Labour Market** – this is a fundamental instrument for pursuing an active employment policy and combating unemployment and social exclusion. It consists of a range of programmes and measures aimed at the socio-professional (re)integration of the unemployed, responding to social needs not satisfied by normal market forces. Work in partnership is favoured in pursuing its objectives, fostering the pooling of resources and emphasising the social usefulness of the activities developed. The principal targets vary according to the programme, i.e.: Workshop-Schools, Occupational Programmes; Integration Programmes; Protected Employment; Ajuda Network; Integration/Employment Programme and the celebration of various Cooperation Agreements and Joint Orders.

In order to optimise the objectives of the Social Labour Market the *Comissão para o Mercado Social de Emprego* [Social Labour Market Committee] was created as the managing body to facilitate the implementation and development of the activities.

- **Programme for the Expansion and Development of Pre-School Education** - the objectives of which are the balanced education and development of the child with a view to their integration into society, pre-school education being seen as the “*first step in the process of lifelong education, supplementing the educational action of the family*”. The aim is to create a national network providing pre-school education, creating good conditions in the educational establishments and guaranteeing free education, among other things.

This programme is aimed at children between the age of three and the age of entering basic education (six years of age).

This programme is managed by the Ministry of Education (Department of Basic Education) and the Ministry of Labour and Welfare (Directorate General for Social Action).

- **Specific programmes for risk groups**

- Project for Supporting the Family and the Child - the objective of which is to identify and thereby put an end to child abuse. It is aimed at victims of physical and/or psychological violence who have been placed under medical care in health centres or hospitals. The managing body of this measure is the *Comissão de Gestão* [Management Committee] of the Project for Supporting the Family and the Child.

- Ser Criança Programme - forms part of a “*context of prevention and early action, the socio-family and educational integration of children at risk of social and family exclusion (...)*”, promoting the participation of children and families as active agents in defining their plan for life and change. It is based on different strategies, such as the development of new social responses, an awareness and development of action-research methodologies, the qualification and training of agents of social involvement in the area of at-risk children and young people. The body responsible for managing this programme is the Institute for Social Development (IDS).

- Rehabilitation and Integration of the Disabled – which seeks to “*safeguard the rights of participation and independence of citizens with disabilities in all sectors of the social, cultural and economic life of society*”. Measures designed to achieve this objective are implemented at various levels: support for NGOs; training and rehabilitation; establishment of a direct line Citizens/Disability/RENAACE, etc.. The body managing this programme is the *Secretariado Nacional para a Reabilitação e Integração das Pessoas com Deficiência* [National Office for the Rehabilitation and Integration of the Disabled].

- Employment Supported in the Normal/Competitive Labour Market – which “*seeks to improve the employability of the disabled who are not in a position to form part of the normal/competitive labour market*”, supporting employers in technical and financial terms. This measure is aimed at the disabled who do not succeed in entering the normal labour market. It is the responsibility of the IEFPP.

- Vocational Assessment/Guidance Programme – which has the principal objective of allowing disabled people over 15 years of age to take appropriate career decisions. This project is run in the Job Centres of the *Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional*.

- Vocational Training Programme – which “*seeks to provide the disabled of no less than 14 years of age with the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain a vocational qualification that will allow them to obtain and/or maintain a job and to progress professionally in the normal labour market*”, technically and financially supporting private non-profit-making institutions in order to develop training actions. The managing body of this programme is the IEFP.
- Placement and Post-Placement Support – which has the objective of “*improving the employability and socio-professional integration of the disabled*”, targeting disabled first-time job seekers who are registered with the Job Centres and employed people who find it difficult to hold down a job. The programme is managed by the IEFP.
- **Social Network** – which has the objective of taking full advantage of resources existing at the level of the agents involved in applying the activation measures and programmes with a view to tackling poverty and social exclusion, taking advantage of existing partnerships at either local or national level, increasing their effectiveness in eradicating poverty and social exclusion.
The targets of the programme are the public and private partners whose objective is social involvement in the respective territory.
The Institute for Social Development is responsible for managing this project.
- **Vida Emprego [Life and Employment] Programme** – the objective of which is the social and professional integration of drug addicts as an integral part of the process of treating drug addiction. Social reintegration is one component of the treatment, and it is extremely important for those concerned to re-establish links with the world of work by acquiring specific skills, either at social or occupational level.
Responsibility for managing this programme lies with the IEFP, jointly with the *Vida [Life] Project*; it is developed at national level by regional structures (regional agencies), in an attempt to stimulate the application of general and specific active employment and training measures such as start-up companies, special training, UNIVAs, job clubs, local employment initiatives (LEIs), self-employed activities, and support for taking on staff.
The targets of this programme are working-age drug addicts who are undergoing or who have finished treatment for drug addiction.
- **Special Vocational Training** – the fundamental objective of which is to promote qualifications and socio-professional integration by running special training actions, balancing “the functional suitability of curriculums, syllabuses and technical-pedagogical methodologies and materials with the specific characteristics of the groups involved (...) learning capacities and rhythms of the target groups (...)”, including action areas such as: careers information and guidance, socio-educational training, support for the process of integration into working life, coordination with social action initiatives.
The targets of this measure are the economically and socially disadvantaged, people who have not completed compulsory schooling and who have learning difficulties or difficulties integrating into society, and specific groups such as the long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities, immigrants, (former) convicts and (former) drug addicts.
The body managing this measure is the IEFP, any agency being eligible to apply to run this training.

2. Active policies and the GMI

The GMI reflects more global guidelines for implementing active social policies which involve the state, non-governmental organisations, the social partners and the people themselves in partnership in an effort to alter the initial situation of the benefit recipient and their household.

It will be noted that the GMI is only one of a range of measures to combat social exclusion and can only function effectively and efficiently if that range as a whole also functions, since subsidiarity between this and other policy measures is strong.

It is therefore necessary “to stimulate the agents of active employment and training policies so that they improve their sensitivity towards guaranteed minimum income beneficiaries”, and to aim to improve “existing measures, creating new responses aimed directly at this public and designed to be applied for a limited time, so that after the requisite assessment they can be adjusted and can enrich the range of measures normally available”¹⁶.

Some measures and programmes aimed specifically at Guaranteed Minimum Income beneficiaries were thus implemented (the FAINA programme and the Integration/Employment Programme, for example), while other measures already in force were exploited, expanding their targets to GMI beneficiaries (such as the Start-up Companies and Measure 2 of INTEGRAR).

FAINA – Fundo de Apoio à Inserção em Novas Actividades [Support Fund for Integration into New Activities]

This programme is intended to provide financial support for individual or collective GMI beneficiaries to create their own businesses (promoting self-employment). It is also meant to supplement the programmes already existing and in operation, serving merely to correct some of the faults of the process of social integration of people and their households.

The support provided for the creation of these activities falls within the framework of the “other support” referred to in the previous chapter and is intended to finance the investment and start-up costs of the activity, including its preparation. This non-returnable financing can amount to a maximum of 24 times the value of the GMI.

Individuals or families benefiting from the GMI are eligible to apply for this support, in close cooperation with the LSC in the region where they live.

Applications for this type of aid take due account of the economic and financial viability of the projects submitted, and also bear in mind how far it will contribute to the development of skills by the individuals in the area of their socio-professional integration. The surety for implementing the project is granted by the CNRM.

The approval of projects within this programme has led beneficiaries to focus their activity mainly in the services sector, particularly in commerce, such as mobile sales or a specific trade (florists, shoe repairers, etc.), to some extent taking advantage of the experience they had in the past or have at present.

¹⁶ Order in Council 1109/99 of 27 December, which creates and regulates the Integration/Employment Programme.

Integration/Employment Programme

“The experience accumulated meanwhile in applying the Guaranteed Minimum Income has led to the appearance of a particular situation in terms of the needs of professional integration – characterised by the very low level of qualifications and extreme poverty of recipients of the measure – which requires new active employment and training policy methods to be tried out, since there is a significant group of beneficiaries who do not enjoy the circumstances necessary to be included in the employment and training measures already available”¹⁷.

This programme is designed to support the development of activities of social interest¹⁸ by GMI beneficiaries with integration agreements in the areas of employment and vocational training. It is promoted in connection with the social labour market (referred to above) in force until 2003. This measure is promoted by the IEFP in cooperation with the Institute for Social Development.

Recipients of this measure should not be excused from being actively available for work, and they must have entered into the integration agreement and may not be covered by other employment and training integration programmes.

The programme runs in two separate stages, though these can be developed alternately: 1) 250 hours of specific training intended to provide appropriate skills for exercising the activity; 2) exercise of the specific activity for 12 months (which can be extended for a maximum of six months).

The IEFP and the IDS are responsible for selecting beneficiaries with a profile appropriate for pursuing these activities, selecting trainers and identifying promoters of projects. These bodies also give financial support for specific training at PTE 1 500/hour for each beneficiary, and support for developing socially useful activities to the value of the National Minimum Wage if the beneficiary is not entitled to unemployment benefits, and to the value of 20% of the monthly unemployment benefit if the beneficiaries receive unemployment benefits.

Employers who take on beneficiaries of this programme under a contract of indefinite duration for a maximum of six months from conclusion of the project of socially useful activity receive an integration premium worth 18 times the NMW, and must maintain these jobs for a minimum of four years.

This programme is supported by the *Horizontes 2000* measure, which is designed to make beneficiaries a priority for the action of employment agents so as to achieve the goal of integrating 45 000 GMI beneficiaries into the labour market during the year 2000.

The IEFP and the Social Security *Instituto de Gestão Financeira* [Financial Management Institute] are responsible for financing the programme.

In June 1999 41 families were covered and 68 jobs had been created. The total amount of financing at that time was around PTE 30 198 431 000.

¹⁷ Order in Council 1109/99 of 27 December, which creates and regulates the Integration/Employment Programme.

¹⁸ Activities of social interest, social support and local services, restoration of the environmental, architectural and cultural heritage, tourism and leisure activities, improvement in basic sanitation infrastructures and services and rural development and multifunctionality in agriculture are considered for this purpose.

Measure 2 of the INTEGRAR Subprogramme – Socio-Economic Integration of the Adult Long-Term Unemployed

This focuses on the social and economic integration of the adult long-term unemployed by cofunding actions which increase and improve the conditions of access of this group to vocational training and the labour market.

The measure confirms the need to provide alternative responses for groups who find it particularly difficult to gain access to training and employment. Measure 2 was one of the measures that broadened its range of recipients so as to be able to respond to the needs of GMI beneficiaries.

Other actions are supported in connection with this measure, particularly careers information/guidance, awareness raising, technical and other support for self-employment and post-training support.

In 1998 the measure had a financial appropriation of 6.9 billion escudos. The trainees approved are mostly GMI beneficiaries (in 46% of cases).

Start-up companies

The introduction of the legal form of the start-up company dates from 1998 and has three essential objectives: 1) tackling poverty and social exclusion by means of professional integration or reintegration; 2) allowing the acquisition and development of personal, social and professional skills; 3) creating jobs.

The start-up companies measure forms part of the strategy to eradicate poverty, basically by developing the social economy, which the state has been doing in cooperation with the social partners as part of the Social Labour Market measures.

This measure is designed to provide technical and financial support (for the creation of jobs and interest-free loans for investment) for non-profit-making companies, the purpose of which is the socio-professional reintegration of the long-term unemployed or the disadvantaged in relation to the labour market.

The recipients of this measure are the long-term unemployed and the disadvantaged unemployed such as: recovering alcoholics, GMI beneficiaries, young people at risk, the homeless, recovering drug addicts and adult members of lone-parent families, among others.

PRODESCOOP

This programme seeks to provide appropriate responses to the problems and needs facing the cooperative sector so as to invigorate it, focusing in particular on promoting a spirit of cooperation in young people.

As an active employment measure this programme supports the recruitment of young first-time jobseekers and the long-term unemployed, as well as GMI beneficiaries and the disabled as specific groups of society particularly affected by unemployment and facing the most serious difficulties of integrating or reintegrating into working life.

This programme is managed by *INSCOOP – Instituto António Sérgio do Sector Cooperativo*, in cooperation with the IIEFP.

This range of measures is accompanied by a range of other resources available to Guaranteed Minimum Income beneficiaries, on the basis of which the Local Support Committees will prepare the integration programme and define the range of actions to be carried out by each beneficiary, taking due account of the resources available (Table 25).

Chapter 3. Coordination in Active Policies: An Institutional Perspective

1. The context for implementing coordination initiatives

In Portugal the term “coordination” underlies other much more widely-used concepts in terms of social policy, particularly when the principles and aims of the measures applying it are analysed. Partnership or work in partnership are the terms increasingly used to designate more or less formalised structures and means of cooperation among different actors with the objective of creating new responses or a concerted response to emerging problems and contributing to local development.

In the 1960s not very formalised experiences of cooperation (which Fernanda Rodrigues calls partnership - see Rodrigues, et al, 1998) had characterised some initiatives that left a profound impression on the outlook for welfare in Portugal. This included the work carried out in connection with the *Serviço de Promoção Social* [Social Promotion Service]¹⁹, by means of which a notion of development as a multidisciplinary activity based on the central philosophy of participation and cooperation was advocated: “the technique of community development involves pooling efforts among local populations and public authorities with a view to improving the economic, social and cultural situation of the country or region” (Silva, 1964: 498). Initiatives promoting cooperation between government departments and local associations also emerged in the 1970s in other areas, such as education, with a view to establishing a new system of adult education (illiterate adults).

Portugal's accession to then European Economic Community (in 1986) involved participation in the European Programme for the Socio-Economic Integration of the Least Privileged Groups, generally referred to as Poverty III, in which partnership as formal cooperation between people and bodies was one of the corner-stones of the action. Such partnership was organised around a Project Management Committee, the objective of which was to promote increasing consolidation in forms of inter-institutional coordination.

In the context of this programme “...a diverse group of local agents (who were dispersed and sometimes not aware of such a problem) encompassing all the interests, contributions and areas of socio-cultural, economic and political influence...” were convened and made to converge “to combat poverty and social exclusion” (Various, 1994: 16). Meanwhile the local nature of these projects facilitated methods more appropriate to “a knowledge of the structures and mechanisms of impoverishment and social exclusion, and a better understanding of the reasons for the insufficiency or inadequacy of current (sectoral and segmented) state practice and of the potential for piloting new models of action” (Various, 1994: 20).

The work of the projects developed in Portugal under this programme gave rise to innovative experiences demonstrating the potential for dialogue and inter-institutional cooperation at local level. The creation of a new service called the *CIAC – Centro de Informação e Acompanhamento Comunitário* [Community Information Centre] as part of the “*Zona Histórica da Sé e S. Nicolau*” project [covering the historical area of Sé and S. Nicolau] should be noted in this respect. In two parishes in the historical centre of Oporto this service brought together “various bodies and institutions with responsibilities in the area of *welfare*,

¹⁹ The *Serviço de Promoção Social* was a Department of the Ministry of Health created in 1965 and abolished in 1972. The economist Manuela Silva was the director of this service.

and made it possible to make full use of technical and financial resources and to embark upon an integrated approach to the problems and needs of the most disadvantaged social groups (...). The multidimensional approach to the problems presented and the integrated way of dealing with them, involving the different local services/institutions, led to the identification and characterisation of the different situations of exclusion. By combining the services/institutions as a whole that traditionally provide “welfare”, the CIAC eliminates the need for the *institutional peregrination* the poor are forced to undertake” (Various, 1994: 75).

These experiences had a decisive impact on the framework of welfare/social action in Portugal and gave rise to organisations that still exist today. At the time of creating a national activation programme to tackle poverty (in 1990), partnership also came to the fore as a principle and is one of the recurring themes in all assessments projects must undergo. Under the national programme other organised partnership structures were created, such as ADEIMA – *Associação para o Desenvolvimento Integrado de Matosinhos* [Association for the Integrated Development of Matosinhos] - which is included in one of the case studies - and other locally-based projects begun previously with the same approach of cooperation between services, and whose action was reinforced (as is the case of the *In Loco* Association in the Algarve, and the project “*Raízes para um Futuro de Sucesso*” [Roots for a Successful Future] in Almada, among others).

When the Directorate General for Social Action was created in 1991 it “was associated with tendencies that were intended to (re)connect the social dimension with economic sectors, enhancing actions planned in the context of contributions deriving from partnership” (Rodrigues, et al, 1998: 9). When the new trends of social action were outlined at that time the “enhancement of co-ordinated action – partnership” was proposed. This was defined as follows: “partnership means inter-institutional agreement and work in networks. The complexity and interrelationship of social problems is not compatible with the functional culture of organisations. The time has come to create a culture of partnership, a concerted and coordinated way of operating based on recognition of the complimentary features and joint responsibility of organisations, whether public or private” (Madeira, 1992).

Meanwhile the information produced and distributed on the issues of poverty and social exclusion, on the basis of which the multidimensional nature of these phenomena is illustrated more clearly, began to demand integrated and systematic action in which the territory is all-important, requiring coordination between all those involved in (or close to) the problem in this area. It should not be forgotten, however, that the Guaranteed Minimum Income and the respective Local Support Committees only emerged in the context of a change in the political framework the key elements of which were social exclusion and the fight against it.

Establishment of the GMI Local Support Committees thus forms part of the most recent trends and challenges in welfare/action, i.e., localisation - fostering coordination between the integration of individuals and families and local development processes, and partnership and coordination between different institutions and between various sectors and policies with a view to promoting the resources necessary for social integration and integrated development. In association with the Guaranteed Minimum Income the LSCs are also geared towards establishing a social right, which is another trend.

As stated in Rodrigues, “in the case of Portugal the consolidation (as yet incomplete) of the welfare state has been based on three distinct and interconnected courses of action: a movement towards the recognition and securing of social rights; a movement towards the regionalisation of measures and policies (a trend common to other national contexts but which in the Portuguese case is justified by the specific nature of the socio-economic imbalances in

the country); and a movement away from fragmented policy conceptions and actions towards an integrated perception of measures and initiatives in the field of social policy and local development. Thus together with the indispensable strengthening of the state (the body that secures rights), another axis develops that stimulates the recognition and appearance of locally-based initiatives which are largely multidimensional and multi-partner” (Rodrigues, et al, 1998: 96).

2. The Local Support Committees – horizontal coordination between social protection and active measures at local level

The Guaranteed Minimum Income Local Support Committees (LSCs) are key to the success of the measure. “If the LSCs were not operational bodies there is a serious risk that the measure would be undermined and reduced to no more than a cash benefit which, while seeking to raise human dignity, would be insufficient to reverse personal and social pathways of exclusion. It is therefore essential for these committees to have dynamic agents capable of pooling public and civil resources likely to promote the social integration of GMI beneficiaries” (CES, 1997: 13).

Act 19-A/96 of 29 June, which established the Guaranteed Minimum Income, provides for the creation of the Local Support Committees. These committees have a territorial scope that corresponds to the *municípios* [municipalities] (or *concelhos* [administrative subdivision of a district [*1]); if the municipalities are heavily populated or there is a marked geographic dispersion that justifies the establishment of another LSC in the same territorial area, the competent Regional Social Security Office may put this into effect after sounding out the local authorities.

Within the terms of the above-mentioned Act the LSCs are obligatorily composed of:

- a) A representative of the Regional Social Security Office of their territorial area;
- b) A representative of the Job Centre of their territorial area;
- c) The municipal coordinator of continuing education;
- d) A representative of the Health Centre of their territorial area.

The Act also provides for a range of bodies that may form part of the LSC, provided they declare their availability to do so, they pursue their activity in the geographical area of the LSC and they are up-to-date with their tax and social security obligations. These bodies are:

- a) Local authorities²⁰;
- b) Private welfare institutions (IPSS);
- c) Employer and trade union associations;
- d) Other legally-established non-profit-making bodies

Due to its potential composition the LSC represents much more than coordination between the Social Security – which encompasses the budget of the Guaranteed Minimum Income benefit and whose local social services provide assistance to disadvantaged people – and the employment and training measures, exploited at local level by the Job Centres. As far as obligatory partners are concerned the LSCs cover the areas most vulnerable to poverty, which also include education and health, and by providing for the inclusion of partners such as local authorities and private agencies they aim to establish transversal (complex) structures for optimising resources in different aspects of social policies.

²⁰ In Portugal the local authorities correspond to the *Câmaras Municipais* [Municipal Councils] – there is a Municipal Council in each of the over 300 municipalities in the country – and the *Juntas de Freguesia* [Parish Councils] – each Municipality is composed of a varying number of Councils.

Meanwhile coordination between the Social Security and the employment measures would be incomplete if provision were not made for the organs of local power and non-governmental organisations to participate, since it is largely the latter that develop a range of actions and projects at local level that come under the umbrella of active social measures, such as the anti-poverty projects and the Integrar Subprogramme training actions, Measure 2. Until now these actions were implemented by each organisation without a common idea of needs, leading to potential overlaps and unfilled gaps. The powers of the LSC can prevent such situations.

According to a report published by the *Comissão Nacional do Rendimento Mínimo* (CNRM, 1999) there are 323 LSC in Portugal, which corresponds to a total of 5 789 obligatory and non-obligatory partners. Almost 46% of the latter correspond to local authorities (Municipal Councils and Parish Councils), which means that the Parish Councils are represented on the LSC in around 28% of cases and that almost 100% of the Municipal Councils are represented. The IPSS and the *Misericórdias* [charitable organisations] as a whole, partners whose traditional area of activity is social action, represent 25.5%. Trade union associations, corresponding to 12% of the non-obligatory partners, also form part of the LSC.

The LSCs are coordinated by a representative of the Regional Social Security Office, though their members may appoint another coordinator if the decision to do so is unanimous. The Committees function in plenary session and the law does not establish a fixed term of office. The data published in the report referred to above suggest that over half the committees meet at least once every two months.

Order in Council 13265/97 issued by the *Ministério da Segurança e da Solidariedade Social* [Ministry of Social Security and Welfare] states that “the regular sustained functioning of the Local Support Committees and their executive boards is an essential condition for the success of the GMI as a measure that mobilises the resources necessary for the integration processes. The Local Support Committees are the result of pooling local intentions and resources made available by the constituent agencies for collectively defined objectives. In some circumstances, however, these resources, particularly material and logistic resources, are not sufficient to ensure proper functioning”. The Regional Social Security Offices must therefore provide administrative and financial support for the Local Support Committees, making available a sum corresponding to 5% of the total sums attributed to the beneficiaries covered by each LSC.

Strong cooperation has been observed between the different partner bodies, since in 99% of cases the material resources used by the Committees (rooms for holding meetings, filing claims and information and advisory services, vehicles to facilitate decentralisation, office material or computer equipment) are provided by the partners, particularly the Municipal Councils (non-obligatory partners) and the Social Security itself (obligatory partner). Since the LSCs are bodies that do not have legal personality they cannot engage personnel directly, so that the human resources for their activities are also provided by the different agencies, predominant among which once again is the Social Security, followed by the Municipal Councils.

The responsibilities of the LSCs are defined around three areas: functioning (functioning of the LSC itself and of the application of the GMI), coordination of resources, and planning and assessment:

1. *Functioning:*

- a) Approving the rules of procedure;
- b) Creating sections when justified;
- c) Appointing the bodies (represented on the LSC) which besides the Regional Social Security Office services should also be responsible for receiving minimum income benefit claims;

- d) Appointing the bodies (represented on the LSC) that may be elected as the legal domicile of claimants who do not have a stable domicile at the time of submitting a claim;
 - e) Appointing the members who must work with the executive board.
2. *Coordination of resources:*
- a) Analysing needs and capacities in their area of action with a view to developing the integration programmes;
 - b) Taking steps with the various (public and private) bodies to obtain the means necessary for developing the integration programmes;
 - c) Subject to the principles of the supervisory Ministry, determining and promoting types of integration action to be adopted locally;
 - d) Liaising with other LSCs and with the *Comissão Nacional do Rendimento Mínimo*.
3. *Planning and assessment:*
- a) Approving the annual action plans;
 - b) Periodically assessing the degree of coverage and execution of the integration programmes underway and their effectiveness.

According to the law the LSCs have an executive board that must consist of four or six members in addition to the coordinator, and which must obligatorily include the representative of the Job Centre. Where the coordinator of the LSC is not a representative of the Social Security the latter must be an integral part of the Board.

As an operational body the responsibilities of the Board can be organised around the same areas established for the LSC:

1. *Functioning*
- a) Appointing the bodies responsible for preparing social reports and for negotiating, preparing and supporting integration programmes;
 - b) Determining places and times for dealing with the public;
 - c) With the recipients entitled to the minimum income benefit, signing the agreements to activate the integration programmes approved.
2. *Coordination of resources:*
- d) Promoting and developing actions and obtaining the means necessary for putting the integration programmes approved into practice;
 - e) Taking steps to obtain the active cooperation of other public or private agencies in pursuing the aims of the LSC.
3. *Planning and assessment:*
- f) Preparing the annual action plans, including the training plan and respective implementation reports, which will be discussed and approved by the plenary of the LSC;
 - g) Assessing proposed integration programmes, particularly as regards their appropriateness and achievability in relation to each case;
 - h) Assessing fulfilment of the integration programmes by the beneficiaries and the bodies involved and approving the changes that may have to be introduced at any time;
 - i) Drafting the reports that may be requested by the LSC, particularly those required for assessing the effectiveness of the integration programmes underway.

Some observations concerning the powers established can be made. Firstly the establishment of the LSC, without abandoning the responsibilities of the state, particularly the Social Security, brings the state “monopoly” on implementing social protection measures to an end: other bodies may be involved in coordinating the LSC, and other agencies may be involved either in dealing directly with the public or in preparing social reports, or in defining and supporting integration programmes. This is also another way of decentralising welfare/social action.

This liberalisation allowed by the law requires the staff of the CRSS social services to adopt a position that involves sharing a “territory” that was hitherto theirs alone. A process of education must also take place, failing which the measure will always be seen as a social security measure, and this will represent an obstacle to effective coordination.

By favouring the presence of various agents the LSC creates a shared responsibility around implementing the programmes necessary for social integration, i.e., it promotes the notion that the gradual change from benefit dependency to independence is a task that concerns everyone. The LSCs are based on a perception of social integration which involves not only the individual affected by poverty but society as a whole, thus rejecting individualist explanations for the existence of such phenomena.

Because the LSCs do not have legal personality they cannot apply directly for projects intended to implement integration programmes. They are responsible above all for carrying out an “analysis of needs and capacities in their area of action” and “taking steps with the various [partner] agencies” so that some of the policy measures drawn up by the Government are actually put into practice. They are therefore obliged to function as bodies that coordinate resources, and a dynamic component is therefore essential, not only to generate new responses or actions but to mobilise a range of partners around the central objective of integration.

Information in the “*Relatório Anual de Avaliação da Actividade das Comissões Locais de Acompanhamento do RMG*” [Annual Assessment Report of the Work of the GMI Local Support Committees] shows that in general the LSCs have raised the level of accomplishment of existing programmes and actions. The following are some examples:

- At the level of vocational training and integration and employment: training and vocational integration courses and schemes; occupational programmes; LIE – local employment initiatives, FAINA, UNIVA, workshop-schools; start-up companies.
- At the level of teaching and education: continuing education; literacy courses.

It must be stressed that although it is the only coordination structure at local level that allows coordination between various social policies, particularly between employment and training policies and welfare policies, the LSCs are not the only participatory structures associated with management of a public measure. There are also *Comissões de Protecção de Menores* [Child Protection Committees] and the *Rede Social* [Social Network], with the respective *Conselhos Locais de Acção Social* [Local Social Action Committees].

Decree Law 189/91 of 17 May legally established the Child Protection Committees, their responsibilities generally being to protect minors who are “victims of abuse, abandonment or destitution or who are in a situation likely to endanger their health, safety, education or morality”. These committees are non-legal official institutions which try to prevent and bring an end to situations likely to affect the physical or moral integrity of children or young people or to jeopardise their integration into the family and community. The Child Protection Committees may act at municipality level and are plural and diversified in composition so as to pool the knowledge and resources of different public and private bodies. The committees should therefore involve a representative of the following organisations: the *Ministério Público* [Public Prosecution Service]; the Municipal Council; the Regional Social Security Office; the Ministry of Education; the *Instituto da Juventude* [Institute for Youth]; Private Welfare Institutions; the Health Centre, and parents’ associations. Although they were legally established in 1991 the Child Protection Committees do not yet cover the whole country.

The Social Network is more recent and was created by a Resolution of the Council of Ministers in 1997. The Social Network is “the range of different forms of mutual assistance and of private non-profit-making agencies and public bodies that work in the area of social action and that coordinate their action with each other and with the Government, with a view to eradicating or attenuating poverty and social exclusion and promoting social development” (Resolution of the Council of Ministers 197 / 97).

The Social Network was created “to promote the formation of a collective and responsible awareness of the different social problems it deals with and to encourage local integrated social support networks which, by pooling the efforts of the different local and national bodies involved, help to provide equitable coverage of the country in social services and facilities” (Resolution of the Council of Ministers 197 / 97). The objectives of the Social Network are to eradicate poverty and social exclusion, to prepare and assess social policy, to renew and bring innovations into action strategies, and to undertake strategic planning.

Official documents also state that the Social Network is part of a social policy geared towards: boosting the effectiveness of programmes, based on close coordination between global priorities and local specific circumstances, encouraging the added value of cooperative and partnership relations between public bodies and private social initiatives, and gradually localising social action. The Social Network will therefore be local in scope at the level of the municipality, being organised from the Local Social Action Committees (LSAC), which will be composed of the chairperson of the LSAC and representatives of the private non-profit-making bodies and agencies of the central administration established in the same area. The LSAC are responsible among other things for: mobilising social committees at parish level; examining the problems submitted to them by the parish social committee or other bodies; forwarding to the Regional Social Security Offices the problems that require the latter’s involvement; issuing reports on whether the municipality is adequately covered by social services and facilities; and taking steps to eliminate gaps in provision.

The *Comissão de Cooperação Social* [Social Cooperation Committee] will function with the Minister for Labour and Welfare. This committee is composed of representatives of the Ministries of Labour and Welfare, Education, Health and Justice and national organisations representing the non-profit-making bodies that operate in the social area.

Although the Resolution of the Council of Ministers that created the Social Network dates from 1997, a programme for implementing pilot projects within the Social Network and involving 40 municipalities in the country is currently in the experimental stage. The IDS – Institute for Social Development – is the body responsible for mobilising these projects.

Based on principles such as integration, the Social Network should act as an increment to local development projects. Based on coordination and gradual cooperation between partners, the Network acts as a “support for the action, making it possible to create synergies between the resources and skills existing in the community” (*Programa Piloto da Rede Social 1999/2000* [Social Network Pilot Programme], supporting document).

This information on the Social Network shows that it could be an important factor for mobilising the Minimum Income LSC itself, acting as a resource in terms of planning and scheduling actions. The relationship between the LSC and the LSAC at local level, however, could have an effect contrary to the dynamic participation it is intended to generate: as stated in the Economic and Social Council report, “it is difficult to reconcile the solution for creating levels of local participation with an excessive multiplication of structures of the same territorial scope with functions in closely related areas. We therefore believe that the functioning of the LSC should be taken into account in developing other projects. This means that the LSCs should develop capacities of efficient coordination with the Child Protection Committees and Social Network (...). In these terms the creation of the LSC is an innovation involving potential and risks, and the Economic and Social Council therefore believes that these new committees and their functioning should be monitored and externally assessed, making it possible to draw inferences that may be useful either for their own development or for the development of other committees which may be created” (CES, 1997: 15).

3. Horizontal and vertical coordination at national level between social protection and active measures – the *Comissão Nacional do Rendimento Mínimo*

Implementation of the GMI and creation of the LSCs was accompanied by the appearance of the *Comissão Nacional do Rendimento Mínimo* (CNRM) (Order in Council 84/MSSS/96 of 19 June), which at national level involves representatives of the Ministries of Education, Health, Labour and Welfare and Justice, the Secretary of State for Housing and representatives of the local authorities, private welfare institutions and trade union and employers' groups. The CNRM thus functions as a link between various ministries and sectors, although it is overseen by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, since responsibility for the benefit lies with the Social Security. According to the terms of the law the attributions of the Committee can be organised around three axes: assessment, mobilisation and innovation:

- Assessment:
 - Assessment of the implementation of legislation on the minimum income and the social effectiveness of the measure;
 - Preparation of the annual report on applying the minimum income measure;
- Mobilisation:
 - Monitoring and support for the action of the bodies responsible for applying the law on the GMI;
- Innovation:
 - Submission of proposals to amend the legal framework with a view to its improvement and adaptation to the real social situation.

The National Committee has a technical support office, the IDS – Institute for Social Development – which also manages the GMI.

According to the chair of the Committee, who also chairs the IDS, the central role of the National Committee is thus to mobilise the Local Support Committees.

Under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare a coordinating team was set up that covers all the Regional Offices and which includes the regional and subregional coordinator of the GMI. In Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, for example, there is a coordinator for the region who is technically accountable to the chairperson of the executive board of the Lisboa e Vale do Tejo Regional Social Security Office. There are also five subregional coordinators who are accountable to the directors of the social action service of each subregional centre: Lisbon, Loures, Sintra, Santarém and Setúbal. There are 61 LSCs in this region, with the same number of coordinators.

The regional coordinators are responsible for establishing a link between the different subregions and the CNRM, informing the subregional coordinators of the guidelines laid down by the National Committee, controlling the application/implementation of the measure and centralising all the information produced in the region on the minimum income.

The regional and subregional coordinators meet every month. According to one of the coordinators interviewed, “WE TRY TO BE VERY AWARE OF EVERYTHING THAT’S HAPPENING ON THE GROUND BECAUSE THE TRAINING THAT HAS TO BE CARRIED OUT WITH THE TEAMS IS DEFINED ACCORDING TO WHAT THE SUBREGIONAL COORDINATORS SAY AND THE PRACTICAL

NEEDS THEY HAVE”. After identifying these needs some actions have already been carried out, notably training on the specific cultural aspects of the Romany ethnic group, with a presentation of what are considered to be “good practice” projects geared towards this community.

Making the criteria for activating and applying the measure uniform is a further concern. In traditional social action, where the support given was discretionary, this same need to make criteria and procedures uniform had been felt as a way of minimising the perverse effects of unregulated activity. A single form for recording information on users (called the *Ficha de Processo Familiar* [Family Claims Form]), which records problems, identifies potential and establishes a programme of work with the family and/or the individual, had already been created through a project developed in the Directorate General for Social Action as a result of the aforesaid need to make procedures uniform and in an attempt to overcome the limitations of a merely welfare activity.

The circulation of information is another central aspect of this structure. A range of information, particularly information for developing integration actions, reaches the staff on the ground more quickly thanks to the circuit followed via CNRM /IDS – regional coordinator – subcoordinator – LSC coordinator. This circuit is not always strictly followed, however, since the LSC coordinators themselves can get direct access to the CNRM through the IDS, making the structure flexible. “THE LSCs ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE CNRM, THOUGH THERE IS DIRECT COORDINATION BETWEEN THE CNRM AND THE LSC COORDINATORS FOR EVERYTHING THEY BELIEVE IS NECESSARY. THIS DOESN’T MEAN THAT PARTICULAR THINGS DON’T COME VIA THE REGIONAL COORDINATION (...) SOMETIMES WE’RE ACTUALLY USEFUL FOR PUTTING A BIT OF PRESSURE ON THEM TO PROVIDE ANSWERS”. At the level of assessment for example, the LSCs answer directly to the CNRM, the regional coordination being responsible for providing technical support for the assessment process.

A regular meeting between the different subregional coordination units is a further initiative promoted by regional coordination. This was one of the needs felt in the Lisboa e Vale do Tejo region, for example, which involves very diverse situations ranging from heavily built-up areas such as the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and the Setúbal area, to regions where agriculture predominates, such as Santarém. This is a huge region in which the subregional services are very distant from each other. Exchange of experience, analysis of specific cases, contact with other projects and the dissemination of certain information are some of the matters discussed at these meetings.

The more positive effects arising from implementing the GMI and from creating a new structure include the fact that a need has been felt for regular contact between the two areas of the Social Security: the Schemes area, which pays the benefits and is basically geared towards administrative procedures; and the social action area, which works on aspects of the integration of beneficiaries. These two areas used to coexist “separately from each other” in each of the regional centres, which meant for example that some GMI benefits were awarded without the social action area being informed, giving rise to a time gap between receipt of the benefit and start-up of integration work.

The area of employment and training, currently overseen by the same ministry as the Social Security – the Ministry of Labour and Welfare – also created an organisation that is part of the so-called Technical Support Group for the IEFP representative on the CNRM, which involves staff from various departments (training, employment and strategic planning), and one objective of which is to make the adjustments necessary to the training and employment measures for GMI beneficiaries. One of the outputs of this group’s work was the preparation

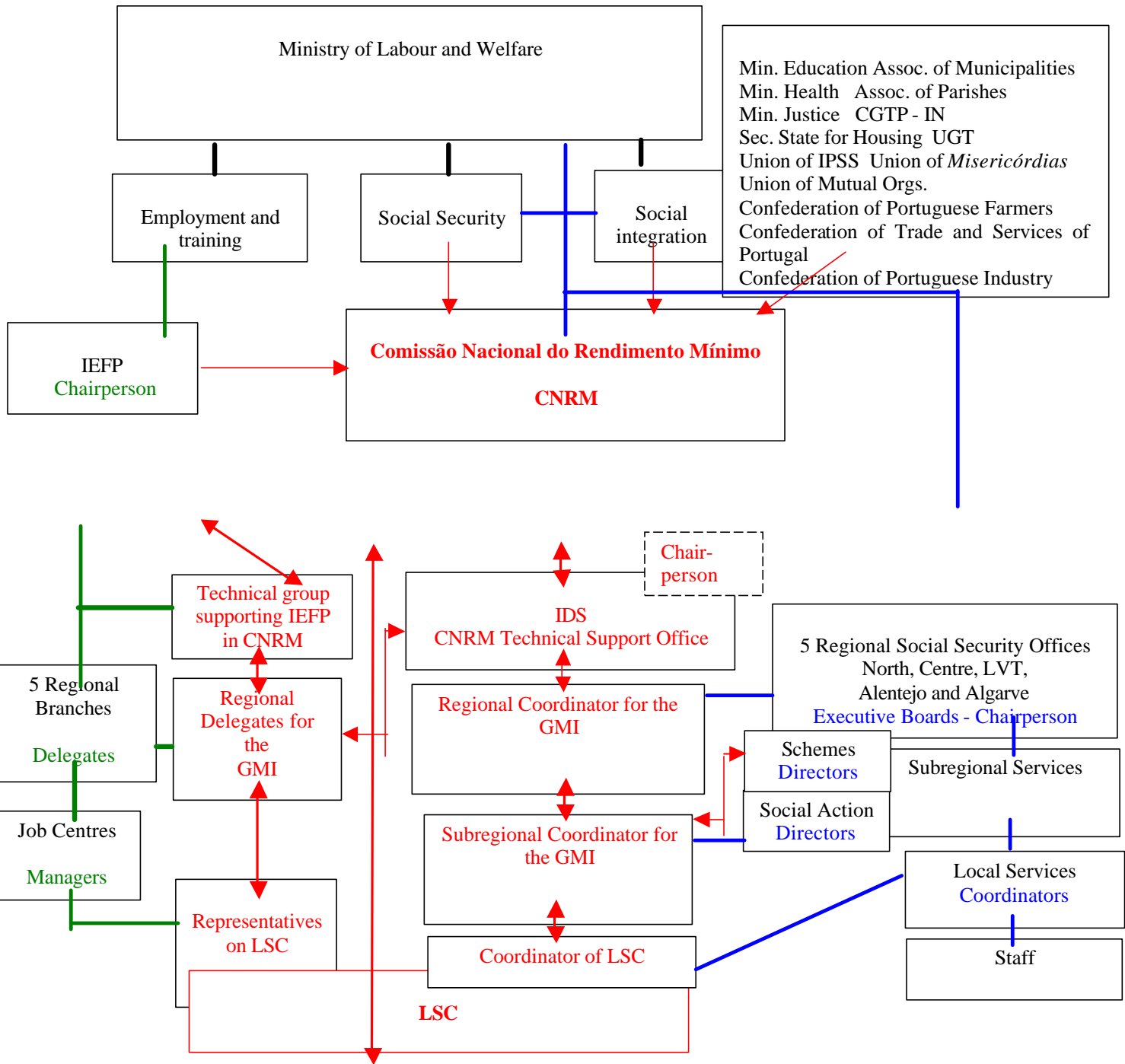
of the GMI procedure manual to guide the agents in the IEFP established at regional level so that greater coordination with personnel on the ground could be provided.

The IDS regularly holds meetings which are attended by the regional coordinators of the GMI, in connection with the Social Security, and by the regional coordinators in the area of employment, notably to provide information on the principal difficulties facing implementation of IEFP training actions and to find solutions for them. At various levels the IDS has encouraged good practice, permanent availability, the provision of information and the stimulation of local initiatives.

The following diagram illustrates the range of new relationships established between the Social Security / Social Action / Employment with implementation of the GMI and the respective creation of the LSC, with a view to greater coordination of action in the different areas. These new relationships, which are consultative and advisory at the level of designing and implementing policies, are shown in red on the diagram; all the others correspond to the traditional vertical and hierarchical functioning of the state bodies.

System of relationships between different actors within the GMI

Employment / Social Security / Social Action



This new “flow of information and coordination” between different staff in the same and in different areas of work created a feeling of greater autonomy and generated a new professional *élan*, based on the conviction that the knowledge acquired throughout academic education is in fact being applied. As one of the Social Security GMI regional coordinators said: “WE’RE DOING WHAT WE’VE LEARNED (...) THE GMI HAS CREATED AUTONOMY. I PLAN MY WORK, I HOLD THE MEETINGS I WANT AND I HAVE RESOURCES THAT I CAN MANAGE, SOMETHING THAT WAS ALWAYS VERY LIMITED IN SOCIAL ACTION”.

This staff autonomy, however, whether of the LSC coordination or even of the ministerial representatives on the CNRM, is limited from the outset, given its position in the hierarchical structure of the state body to which it belongs. A LSC coordinator says for example: “THEY’RE STAFF, AND AS SUCH THEY HAVE A CERTAIN HIERARCHY. THEY COORDINATE A GROUP OF PARTNERS, AND SOMETIMES IT’S A BIT DIFFICULT TO KNOW HOW FAR YOU CAN AND CAN’T GO AS A COORDINATOR, BECAUSE THEY ARE REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF”.

This organisation therefore plays a consultative and advisory role. Although it has no decision-making capacity it does have a strong influence that has already been expressed in relation to gradually adapting the training and employment measures to the characteristics of a more disadvantaged public, particularly GMI beneficiaries.

Despite its limitations in terms of decision-making processes, however, this organisation leaves some margin for manoeuvre, at least at local level, for those who are able to exploit the flexibility allowed by the hierarchies and by the loopholes the system permits.

Despite the legislation and the coordination between different ministries via their representatives on the LSC and the CNRM, the GMI is seen at the highest level of the hierarchies as a Ministry of Labour and Welfare measure. The integration of the employment dimension with Social Security in the same ministry certainly contributed towards greater coordination between the two in implementing the GMI, leading some IEFP supervisory staff to claim that the measure is a priority with targets to meet in terms of integrating beneficiaries into the labour market, thus creating an urgent need for the Job Centres at local level to mobilise around the LSC with a view to pursuing the objectives established. Meanwhile assertions arise from the Social Security area as to how progress has been made in relation to gradually adapting training measures to the GMI target public.

Coordination with the other two ministries obligatorily represented on the LSCs has meanwhile not been as significant. This lack of coordination is based on the one hand on the already mentioned perception that the GMI is a Social Security measure, personified in the image of a minister: “YOU’RE THE ONES WHO ARE PAYING (...) MY MINISTER NEVER TALKS ABOUT THE GMI, IT’S ALWAYS YOURS”; and on the other on the fact that the other ministries have not adapted either in personnel or organisational terms to participate in the measure more fully. The Ministry of Education, for example, felt that it was not worth creating a new support structure for the GMI, but that instead the adult education municipal committees, which already had some tradition of coordination with the Social Security structures and the local authorities, should be exploited. The only one that tried to pave the way for a better application of the GMI was the Ministry of Labour and Welfare: “STAFF, ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL AND DRIVERS WERE TAKEN ON IN A WAY I’D NEVER SEEN IN 23 YEARS OF SERVICE”. Despite this effort, however, gaps persist at local level in terms of personnel allocated to implementing the measure, and since they cannot be filled with the participation of the partners they jeopardise the effectiveness of the measure and contribute to its poor social image, as some of the case studies show.

4. The “rhetoric” of coordination

It should be noted that the Guaranteed Minimum Income was conceived and implemented within the same framework of governance, and as such there is a strong coincidence between the technical dialogue, the political dialogue and the legislative support.

As the assessment report of the experimental stage of the GMI states, this represented “a dual movement which on the one hand leads people, families and groups who are excluded and destitute to begin processes that afford them access to citizenship rights and social participation, and on the other leads the institutions to offer these people, families and groups real opportunities to begin such processes, providing them with the means, giving them support and making spaces available where they can meet” (CIES, 1997: 7). This “offer” by the institutions is substantiated on the LSCs.

At the level of technical-political dialogue the LSCs stand out as “a participatory form of managing a public policy measure”, not so that the “state should delegate its functions, but so that it can carry them out more efficiently” (Pedroso, in CES, 1997: 110)²¹. The principle of efficiency therefore underlies the establishment of the local committees, since they allow a multisectoral and integrated approach to problems.

By making use of partnerships the state is resuming forms of welfare prior and/or parallel to the development of the Welfare State, seeking to reinforce social links on the ground where relationships are established. The implementation of the social integration of GMI beneficiaries thus does not solely and exclusively involve “offering opportunities to the beneficiaries; awareness of the social context in which they live must be raised to bring these opportunities to fruition. Integration may only come about within the existing limitations if it involves a diversified range of local agents who contribute towards creating a local climate of integration” (Pedroso, in CES, 1997: 109).

This climate will in particular involve the functioning of the LSC as a body exerting pressure on the different fields of social policies: “the local committees are not only consultative bodies, they are bodies which are crucial for promoting the integration of the citizens who benefit from them. This option was not accidental. The commitment of the various local agents could contribute decisively in the short, medium and long term to many families escaping the poverty and exclusion that forced them to claim the minimum income” (Pedroso, in CES, 1997: 109).

At central political level the Guaranteed Minimum Income truly takes the form of a right. Its inclusion as a Social Security benefit is intended to prevent it being seen as discretionary assistance and to actually apply it as a right among other social rights that must be applied with rigour: “THE FACT THAT THE MEASURE HAS THIS CHARACTERISTIC OF GUARANTEEING A RIGHT TO BE ABLE TO MEET NEEDS MEANS THAT WHOEVER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR AWARDED THE BENEFIT, IN THIS CASE THE SOCIAL SECURITY, MUST ACT ACCORDING TO RIGOROUS CRITERIA”.

In most cases the political dialogue at local level, however, conflicts totally with this position, tending to reject the measure as a benefit by right. This position (specified by some interviewees and also referred to in the case studies), adopted by some local political leaders (major differences along party political lines not occurring at this level), is based not so much

²¹ Paulo Pedroso was Chairman of the Committee that drafted the Decree Law that created and regulates the Guaranteed Minimum Income. He is currently Secretary of State for Employment and Training.

on some beneficiaries failing to comply with the contracts embodied in the measure, but simply on denying the securing of a right to certain individuals or groups. This denial is based on a desire to maintain the exercise of a certain social control and of the power this confers, which is removed when there are predefined criteria, without the interference of subjective assessment.

The GMI therefore poses a challenge for society and for the LSCs in particular in the sense of creating a “local climate of integration”, essential to which is the notion that “THE RIGHT TO A MINIMUM BASIC SUBSISTENCE INCOME IS A RIGHT I AM OWED BECAUSE I EXIST, IRRESPECTIVE OF JUDGMENTS ABOUT WHETHER I DESERVE IT OR NOT”.

Although the GMI has brought about a significant increase in the social workers recruited by the Regional Social Security Offices, the local feeling is that resources continue to fall short of the demands and volume of the work involved. Functioning in partnership by establishing the LSCs was expected to allow the human resources of the various partners to be exploited to the full in terms of sharing the workload. The measure is still in a stage of growth, but after almost three years since its general application the shortcomings persist, giving rise to a build-up of claims and the beneficiaries’ failure to enter into the eagerly anticipated contracts in certain areas of the country. Meanwhile the strong presence of an informal economy and the weaknesses of the tax system facilitate improper use of the measure. In addition to this the inspection system of the Social Security itself had never functioned in coordination with the social action services, so that there also had to be a significant learning process in this respect.

In December 1999 an article appeared in the press based on an audit carried out by the *Tribunal de Contas* [Court of Auditors] on the Guaranteed Minimum Income, highlighting the negative aspects of applying the measure and referring to the existence of improper payments. It was stated that “although it was clearly defined, the law that created the GMI in Portugal is lacking in provisions to prevent and accordingly to penalise possible frauds”, highlighting the “need for more effective controls” (*Expresso*, 27 November 1999).

The national structures of the GMI have tried to minimise the negative impact of this type of media coverage, stressing a dialogue of integration. In his paper at the seminar “Policies and Instruments to Tackle Poverty in the European Union: the Guarantee of a Minimum Income (Almancil, February 2000), the Minister for Labour and Welfare said: “I can very confidently tell you that levels of correctness in awarding this Social Security benefit are very high and the existence of improper benefits is marginal compared to the overall results achieved”. Thanks to the gradually lower receipt of claims it has also been possible to cancel some benefits: “IN 80% OF CASES THIS CORRESPONDS TO INTEGRATING THE BENEFICIARY INTO THE LABOUR MARKET, WHICH IS A POSITIVE ASPECT”. The unjustified failure of beneficiaries to comply with the integration agreements stipulated also leads to the benefit being withdrawn, but there is no penalty for the services failing to comply, insofar as “COMMITMENTS MUST ONLY GO AHEAD IF WE ARE SURE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE”.

An assessment of the impact of the GMI is currently being undertaken. Previously it had only been assessed at the end of the experimental period. Lack of computerisation of the social services has meanwhile prevented the integration programmes from being continuously assessed and the results identified, even by the local teams. The change from individual support (which would always have to be ensured in any event) to defining action plans covering the problems presented by a group of beneficiaries is also limited by the absence of computerisation.

The political dialogue around the GMI highlights the importance of the measure as a right which has allowed 134 618 families corresponding to 405 777 people ²² living in extreme poverty to have access to subsistence conditions.

A piece of research recently undertaken on the GMI leads to the following conclusions: “taking as a reference the central figures corresponding to a poverty line defined as 50% of the average, the basic situation of the GMI records a reduction in poverty, expressed in terms of the number of individuals, from 10.5% to 9.8%. Although at first sight this might appear to be a modest reduction, it means that thanks to implementing the GMI, around 21 000 families or more than 66 000 people were removed from poverty” (Pereirinha, coord, 1999:543). The authors also state that the changes recorded in the severity and intensity of poverty, with reductions of 28% and 51% respectively, are more significant than the poverty rate.

According to the politicians responsible the organisation surrounding the existence of the LSC is viewed very positively: “the architecture proposed and rapidly approved by the mass participation of (...) over 6 000 organisations throughout the whole country enshrines that model: the Local Support Committees, with all the weaknesses of consolidation engendered by shared management, are now a space in which, in addition to the personalised support of individual and family integration pathways, an attitude of integrating resources and a collective will for change are generated and exist” (Minister Ferro Rodrigues, Almancil, 2000).

At the time of assessing the experimental stage of the measure some effects of the work of the LSCs were identified, such as the development of a greater *culture of partnership* and a raising of the partners’ awareness of the problems of poverty. These effects are mirrored in the increase in the capacity of access of GMI beneficiaries to other social support programmes and facilities.

According to the approach put forward for assessing the experimental period (see Capucha, coord, 1998), in which some direct (and indirect) coordination was established between the GMI and certain areas of social policies, the following should be noted:

- Employment:
 - Priority for the creation of employment – A target was created at IEFP level to integrate 45 000 GMI beneficiaries into the labour market during the year 2000;
 - Social and occupational integration of the most disadvantaged categories – In June 1999, according to the half-yearly implementation report of the measure, 16 975 beneficiaries (almost 17%) were covered by employment actions.
- Training:
 - Promotion of the vocational qualifications of the disadvantaged population – 4 716 beneficiaries were undergoing vocational training in June 1999;
 - Adaptation of the qualification system to the needs of the least privileged – The Socio-Professional Training Programme was created, which makes it possible to combine the vocational training component with academic progress.
- Education:
 - Priority for education – Although specific figures are not available there has been an increase in literacy and continuing education courses;

²² Data from the June 1999 Half-Yearly Report, “Implementation of the Measure and Characterisation of Beneficiaries”.

- Promotion of academic qualifications – 25 842 beneficiaries (25% of total beneficiaries) are involved in actions connected to education, 10 563 in continuing education and 13 142 attending compulsory schooling, which in most cases corresponds to school-age children who dropped out of the education system and who are now returning thanks to the GMI.
- Health:
 - Improvement in the health levels of the population – 29 389 beneficiaries (29% of the total) are involved in health actions, of which 8 553 in primary prevention, 17 551 in consultations and treatment and 1 462 in alcoholism and drug addiction detoxification consultations.
- Social facilities:
 - Improvement in levels of coverage of the disadvantaged population by social facilities – 2 033 children were placed in kindergartens; 1 853 were placed with childminders or in crèches.
- Housing:
 - Improvement in the living conditions of the population – 14 219 people (14% of the total) were covered by actions in the area of housing, 2 721 of whom were rehoused and 8 474 given support to improve their housing conditions.

At the level of political power, however, there seems to be a notion that there is still a great deal to be done, the Minister for Labour and Welfare highlighting the following aspects:

- “Concentrating even more on combating the improper award of the benefit, increasing the resources available for this purpose and increasing the efficiency of the services that have special responsibilities in this respect.
- With the prudence and consideration the financial means available require, assessing and correcting the deficit still prevailing in the human resources capable of providing closer support for families benefiting from the Guaranteed Minimum Income.
- Improving the response capacity of all sectors of the central public administration in the areas in which they have responsibilities.
- Emphasising the creation and adaptation of responses in the area of employment and vocational training as a more effective way of promoting processes to make families independent as regards the GMI mechanism” (Rodrigues, 2000).

Chapter 4. Coordination practices

1. Case study 1: Matosinhos

1.1. General presentation

In the Municipality of Matosinhos the Guaranteed Minimum Income Local Support Committee is made up of 23 public and private bodies, including representatives of the local political power (Parish Councils and Municipal Council), state bodies with local branches, and representatives of organisations of civil society.

The Matosinhos LSC is therefore made up of: Matosinhos Municipal Council; 10 Parish Councils, corresponding to all the parishes in the municipality; five IPSS; the Matosinhos *Misericórdia*; one mutual assistance association; two cooperatives, one of which is the social services college; the *União de Sindicatos do Porto* [Oporto Trade Union Association], affiliated to the CGTP (*Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses*) [General Confederation of Portuguese Workers]; the UGT – *União Geral de Trabalhadores* [General Workers' Union]; and one development association.

The LSC is also made up of representatives of the four obligatory partners: the Social Security, represented by the coordinator of the LSC, a staff member of the Regional Social Security Office of the North, Oporto Subregional Service, Matosinhos local service; Employment, by means of a representative of the Matosinhos Job Centre, a body of the *Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional*; Health; and Education, by means of the person responsible for municipal coordination of Continuing education in Matosinhos, part of the Oporto Education Area, which in turn is part of the Oporto Regional Directorate for Education of the Ministry of Education.

The LSC meets on a quarterly basis in Matosinhos. In order to simplify the structure and at the same time to increase the mobilisation of some local agents it was decided that LSC meetings would only be attended by one of the Chairpersons of the Council²³, representing the 10 parishes, who would be responsible for passing on information and organising meetings with the other Chairpersons, with the presence of the Town Councillor for social action of Matosinhos Council “TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAS HAPPENED ON THE LSC AND WHAT CAN BE DONE IN EACH PARISH COUNCIL”.

There is a certain harmony among partners in the Matosinhos LSC towards the measure and its objectives, which is reflected in the virtually unanimous assertion that the GMI is a priority measure for the organisations each interviewee represents. The political fellow-feeling among the different Parish Councils and between the latter, the Municipal Council and the Government, which is potentially shared by some of the representatives/those responsible for other organisations, certainly facilitates the implementation of the measure and its priority nature but does not silence all dissent. Despite political convergence, some differences arise among the partners of the LSC between those who see the measure as an important instrument of social action and those who are essentially concerned with controlling beneficiaries.

²³ The representative of the Parish Councils on the LSC is a woman, the only female Council Chairperson in the Municipality.

Nevertheless, and as has already been said, the measure is accepted and the priority it is given is reflected in the existence of a minimum income pilot project at the time of the experimental stage that was promoted by the Municipal Council and by *ADEIMA* - Association for the Integrated Development of Matosinhos.

Meanwhile a collective commitment is recognised: “EVERYONE IS RESPONSIBLE, YOU CAN SEE IT ON THE FACES OF THE PEOPLE WE SEE (...) EVERYONE IS RESPONSIBLE, NOT JUST THE BENEFICIARIES, AS SOMETIMES TENDS TO HAPPEN”.

According to the law the LSC has an executive board. In this case, in addition to the four obligatory partners it includes a representative of the Municipal Council, a representative of *ADEIMA* and a representative of Perafita Parish Council. The board meets every week to comply with its legally-established responsibilities (see Chapter 3), and is attended by the case-workers responsible for preparing and supporting the programmes under analysis, in addition to the beneficiaries when they sign the respective integration contract: “THE CASE-WORKERS USED TO SUBMIT THE CASE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, WHICH ANALYSED IT. THE PARTNERS SIGNED THE AGREEMENTS IN THE RESPECTIVE AREA. AT THE MOMENT ALL THE PARTNERS CAN MEET THE BENEFICIARIES, SO THERE’S GREATER COOPERATION IN ANALYSING SITUATIONS, AND GREATER INVOLVEMENT BOTH OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES. IT’S VERY DIFFERENT FOR US TO ANALYSE A CASE FROM THE DESCRIPTION OF A STAFF MEMBER THAN TO MEET THE PERSON OR FAMILY IN THE FLESH”.

The LSC has a funding corresponding to 5% of the sums allocated for payment of the GMI cash benefits. In the specific case of the Oporto CRSS the 5% is calculated on the basis of the benefits paid to the beneficiaries covered by the 21 Local Support Committees in that Regional Office; the amount arising is then divided equally among them all. In 1999 the budget of the Matosinhos LSC was around 6 billion escudos (nearly 30 000 euro), a sum that comes from the budget of the CRSS of the North for the GMI and which has been applied in training the partners (management and staff), notably by means of running a seminar and recruiting personnel to support and put beneficiaries’ integration plans into practice and to support the implementation of new actions.

The recruitment of these people not only filled some gaps in personnel from the quantitative point of view but also helped to make the technical team multidisciplinary. The following were recruited: two childcare workers, two case-workers, a manager and an administrative officer.

This recruitment is temporary, however, leading to a “fluctuation” in personnel. It does allow coordination with other mechanisms, however, notably the Vocational Training Courses, a measure of the *Instituto do Emprego* [Institute for Employment] which aims to facilitate the integration of recent graduate first-time jobseekers into the labour market by granting an allowance to the recruiting body, and the *POC – Programas Ocupacionais para Pessoas Carenciadas* [Occupational Programmes for People in Need], for the unemployed.

Since the LSC does not have legal personality one of the partners presents proposals to the Job Centre (which is also represented on the LSC) as part of the above-mentioned programmes for recruiting personnel with the qualifications identified, who in turn must be registered with the respective Job Centre. The difference between the amount funded by this programme and what the people earn is covered by the budget of the LSC, which in turn transfers sums to the applicant body, through which payment is made directly to the new workers. The LSC budget is generally approved in a meeting of members. The transfer of sums from the LSC to a partner body must be approved by the CRSS.

Coordination of the LSC is the responsibility of the CRSS through one of its staff who carries out other functions in the institution.

The scarcity of social workers is one of the difficulties highlighted in comparison with the number of accepted claims for which integration programmes must be prepared. There is a significant pooling of effort, however, which not only facilitates access of the LSC to programmes run by the IEFP, as is the case of the already mentioned Occupational Training Courses, but which also means that some of the institutions in the municipality are also involved in providing information and advice to beneficiaries and preparing and supporting the integration programmes.

Thus besides the five CRSS case-workers who are allocated to the GMI on a part-time basis, part of ADEIMA's resources are also allocated to implementing this measure: five case-workers and two psychologists on a part-time basis. One of the Parish Councils (Perafita) has also increased its personnel by recruiting a case-worker to provide information and advice in the parish itself. More recently the action of the LSC, particularly the board, led to a change in the attitude of the Health Centres to the GMI: "WE'VE CHANGED IT SO THAT THE HEALTH CENTRE CASE-WORKERS START TO SUPPORT CLAIMS WHOSE INTEGRATION PROGRAMMES INVOLVE ACTIONS IN THE AREA OF HEALTH. THERE WAS A DIRECTIVE THAT SAID THAT THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT; WE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND IT, BECAUSE HEALTH IS AN OBLIGATORY PARTNER".

By May 2000 Matosinhos had 3 486 claims to be distributed among about 15 part-time staff, which is clearly inadequate in view of the demands of the type of work to be carried out, but human resources have been significantly mobilised.

1.2. Contextualisation

Matosinhos is a coastal municipality in the North located in the Oporto Metropolitan Area. This municipality experienced intense population growth between the 1960s and the 1980s, growing to around 152 000 inhabitants and reaching a population density of 2 513 inhabitant/Km² in the 1990s. Its demographic growth is related to its proximity to the city of Oporto (capital of the North region), and to its own economic dynamism and capacity to generate employment.

Various sectors of the economy are concentrated here: the canning industry, heavy and light mechanical engineering, the refining of oil and by-products and the textile industry. Its proximity to the Atlantic has also produced a significant fishing industry, combined with agriculture in a territory which is already metropolitan but not yet urban, making the inhabitants of Matosinhos "*people of the land and sea*".

The oil crisis, however, associated in the 1990s with the crisis in textiles and the canning industry, brought unemployment to the municipality. In June 2000 6 175 individuals were registered with the Matosinhos Job Centre out of a total of around 152 000 residents. The low levels of education and vocational qualifications of the population, plus the growing insecurity of the labour market, hinders stable vocational integration and access to satisfactory levels of income. The groups most affected are the young, those who lost their jobs during their forties and the female population in general.

A further problem facing the municipality is related to housing. When population growth intensified it was not accompanied by a housing policy that afforded access to dignified

housing for all newcomers to the city, leading to the appearance of run-down neighbourhoods built by the residents themselves in an attempt to solve their housing problem, thus creating shanty towns. Meanwhile some of the older rural houses were deteriorating and no longer met modern needs of hygiene and comfort.

The need to create council housing was felt in particular in the wake of the April 1974 Revolution, and after a period of virtual stagnation in council housing policies rehousing in the two metropolitan areas of the country (Lisbon and Oporto) resumed in the 1990s with creation by the Government of the *Programa Especial de Realojamento* (PER) [Special Rehousing Programme]. Over the years Matosinhos meanwhile had its own momentum of constructing council housing, though it was not always carried out in the most socially correct way. This has given rise to a high number of council housing districts, some of which are very large and cut off from the surrounding urban context, leading to the social segregation of their residents and the accumulation of many social problems, particularly low levels of education, the youngest population groups included, which in many cases is reflected in early drop-out from the education system and, more recently, the appearance of drug addiction problems.

In the late 1980s a characterisation study of the municipality promoted by the local authority highlighted the problems experienced in two of these council neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, due to the problems their pupils brought to school, a group of teachers from two schools in the first cycle of basic education that served these two districts mobilised with Municipal Council support to begin a movement that led to the creation in 1991 of ADEIMA, an association composed of various institutions committed (and essential) to a local activation strategy to combat poverty, which the Council itself cofunds – according to interviewees the Council transferred 80 million escudos to ADEIMA in 1999.

This association concentrated on some of the council neighbourhoods in the municipality, and by this means Matosinhos has been developing a work ethic in which the efforts of different bodies are pooled and coordinated. ADEIMA “contributed decisively to strengthening an inter-institutional and inter-sectoral momentum of work that had already been operating for sometime (...); besides allowing a variety of contributions from the most varied social agencies to be exploited, ADEIMA played the important role of providing legal support for all the actions promoted by these agencies, guaranteeing their funding and ensuring their profitability and effectiveness” (Ruivo, 2000).

This experience, based on pioneering work in which many of the LSC’s partners have participated, is a unifying factor for the LSC, creating a feeling of belonging to a group: “HERE IN MATOSINHOS WE ENJOY THE PRIVILEGE OF ALWAYS BEING THE FIRST IN EVERYTHING”.

1.3. The process of change

Despite considerable experience of work involving different organisations over the years, the establishment of a structure such as the GMI Local Support Committee has also made this partnership, involving all the Parish Councils and some private welfare institutions which had previously not been very closely involved in a collective process of work, more open.

This expansion highlighted the dynamism of one of the Councils and its capacity to mobilise its partners. Its involvement in previous projects and the fact that it is run by women are cited by interviewees as contributing to this greater awareness towards the GMI and joint work with other bodies: “WE WERE ALREADY IN FAVOUR OF SOCIAL SUPPORT BEFORE THE GMI WAS

CREATED. I ALSO THINK THAT IN THE CASE OF THIS COUNCIL THE FACT THAT THE MANAGEMENT POSTS ARE HELD BY TWO WOMEN ALSO HELPS”.

On the other hand this expansion could increase the likelihood of a division arising among the LSC’s partner institutions. In general the partners have a democratic attitude – “ALL POINTS OF VIEW ARE ACCEPTED” – but it is certainly generally recognised that “THERE ARE PARTNERS WHO DOMINATE THE BOARD”, in that “THEY HAVE A BACKGROUND OF GREATER INVOLVEMENT”, “THEY ARE CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE”, “THEY HAVE EXPERIENCE OF WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP” and they have a “NON-TRADITIONAL” practice. Enhancing other bodies that were hitherto outside these circuits could involve supporting their initiatives, as one of the interviewees stated: “WE EVEN SUPPORT AN INSTITUTION THAT DOESN’T HAVE CASE-WORKERS IN PREPARING A PROJECT FOR A START-UP COMPANY”.

All the experience gained suggests that it should be seen as a process under continuous construction, in which it is certainly “MORE DIFFICULT TO WORK WITH THOSE WHO WEREN’T USED TO THIS TYPE OF FUNCTIONING”.

Implementation of the GMI has brought about some changes in the institutions’ personnel, particularly the CRSS, by means of (albeit insecure) new recruitment (three case-workers), the creation of administrative services allocated to social action²⁴, and the creation of the subregional coordinator for the GMI. This coordinator is responsible for liaising with the different LSCs in the Oporto district by holding regular meetings. All the information concerning the GMI is transmitted to all coordinators of each LSC by this coordinator.

The shortages of personnel in the CRSS due to a prolonged policy of not taking on staff were (partly) overcome by the expansion engendered by the creation of the measure, but given the increase in work it also generated it remains insufficient. These services therefore still appear to be marked above all by “emergency” activity rather than by activity shaped by an objective-driven action plan: “WE PRIORITISE THE MOST SERIOUS SITUATIONS. WE CAN’T LET ANY OF THEM ESCAPE”.

Profound changes did not take place in the other organisations. Personnel were made available to participate in meetings and their working time was reallocated to some degree. In the specific case of the ADEIMA however, this reallocation is not always seen in a positive light and may to some extent correspond to a regression in terms of the social action that had been provided in the municipality. The time spent on dealing with situations and analysing and supporting cases reduces the time available for carrying out other types of action of a community nature: “WE WERE NO LONGER ABLE TO SUPPORT THE ORGANISATION OF ‘RESIDENTS’ ASSOCIATIONS’, FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOODS”.

There is an awareness, however, that greater changes must be made in the structures and organisation of the institutions so as to make their information circuits and the way they take decisions more flexible and less bureaucratic: “PARTNERSHIP INVOLVES CHANGES IN ACTIVITY AND SHOULD INVOLVE CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE PARTNER ORGANISATIONS, AND SOMETIMES IT’S COMPLICATED TO MEDDLE IN THEM. I THINK PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THIS, BUT WE NEED TIME TO RESOLVE MATTERS THAT INVOLVE CHANGING THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN DONE IN THE SAME WAY FOR YEARS, WITHOUT MUCH OPENNESS AND WITHOUT GREAT FLEXIBILITY. CHANGING SOME PROCEDURES MEANS CHANGING THINGS FROM THE MANAGER DOWN, EVERYBODY HAS TO BE INVOLVED, IT CAN’T BE JUST ONE”, and it is a fact that while there is an

²⁴ Until then there were only administrative services within the CRSS in the area of the “Schemes”, i.e., in the component of work of those Offices that relates to the payment of benefits (pensions, unemployment benefits, sickness benefits, etc.).

attempt to restructure the basic services so as to better meet the needs of the work and the target population, there is a whole underlying (hierarchical) structure that demands particular procedures and that remains unchangeable.

The joint work carried out in the board and the LSC, favoured by good cooperation between some partners, made it possible to increase the decentralisation and integration of information and advisory services. Decentralised premises for providing information and advice were created by the different parishes in spaces made available by the parishes themselves. Information and advisory services in the council neighbourhoods, provided by ADEIMA, began to form part of the GMI itself as a new initiative. Proximity to the grassroots in turn favours a service focusing on the population's needs and interests: it can be done in the premises set aside for this purpose or in the beneficiaries' own home; it can occur on a scheduled or an unscheduled basis. Claims for the GMI can also be submitted in the Job Centre. This decentralised service is based on pooling efforts and resources: "THE PARISH COUNCIL APPLIED TO THE JOB CENTRE TO RECRUIT PEOPLE AND THE SANTA CASA DA MISERICÓRDIA PROVIDED A VAN FOR TRANSPORTING DOCUMENTS TO THE CRSS".

In the case of Matosinhos the most important thing to have come out of creating the LSC was that a significant step was taken towards consolidating and recognising a body of work that had already been carried out, which facilitates its implementation: "IF PEOPLE ALREADY HAVE THIS MOMENTUM IN PLACE, IF THEIR HABITS ARE INTERNALISED, IT'S EASIER"; "THE PREVIOUS WORK IN PARTNERSHIP SHOWED THE POTENTIAL OF THIS TYPE OF FUNCTIONING. PARTNERS WHO ALREADY HAVE PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE COORDINATE BETTER AND MORE SIMPLY".

This type of experience highlights the difference in functioning of the institutions in the municipality compared to what happens in other places, and as has already been mentioned this acts as a factor of positive identification with the work carried out: "WHEN I HAVE MEETINGS AT REGIONAL LEVEL I VERY OFTEN RAISE ISSUES RELATING TO SPECIFIC FAMILIES, AND MY COLLEAGUES ASK: *BUT DO YOU GO TO GMI MEETINGS EVERY WEEK? I ONLY GO EVERY MONTH... DO YOU ALWAYS GO? I SEND OFFICIAL LETTERS*"; "MATOSINHOS PERFORMS WELL IN THE SOCIAL AREA (...) IT HAS SOCIAL DYNAMICS THAT FACILITATE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PARTNERSHIPS, AND WE CAN DEFINE AND ACHIEVE COMMON OBJECTIVES, SO THE RESULTS ARE NECESSARILY BETTER AND EXTREMELY POSITIVE".

The ease of cooperation between the different institutions and a certain momentum means that other measures available, particularly from the IEF, work in harmony with the GMI: the Vocational Training Courses, the Occupational Programmes for People in Need; the Start-Up Companies; the Anti-Poverty Projects, etc..

It has been said that "THERE WERE NEVER TRADITIONAL CASE-WORKERS IN MATOSINHOS; HERE THE CASE-WORKERS ALWAYS REALLY WORKED WITH THE PEOPLE", in a task that seeks to respond to the different needs and hardships felt by people and families, from the perspective that a multidimensional problem that requires action which is also multidimensional was a perspective that had already been adopted. It is therefore easier to achieve a systematic understanding of the problems and an understanding of the objectives of the GMI that goes beyond integrating people into the labour market and that "MEANS ALLEVIATING THE CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY AT THE LEVEL OF HEALTH, EDUCATION..." or, even more comprehensively, working towards restoring the conditions for beneficiaries to exercise citizenship.

Although this appears to be a prevailing idea there are nevertheless "PARTNERS WHO DO NOT SEE THE MEASURE AS A RIGHT, IT IS STILL A FAVOUR THEY ARE DOING PEOPLE". This attitude is

not unconnected to the delay in bringing the integration programmes to fruition due to personnel difficulties: a long hiatus is created between the award of the benefit and signature of the integration contract. This hiatus has a very negative image for everyone, since it casts doubt on the attribution of responsibility to users and ultimately to the organisations that actually created and implemented it. The emphasis is placed on the former, however, giving a notion of an understanding of the phenomenon of poverty that blames the poor themselves: “IN ESSENCE THE GMI BECOMES A MEASURE THAT PROTECTS AND GIVES MONEY TO SCROUNGERS. THE MEASURE IS VALID BUT THERE'S NO POINT GIVING MONEY TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW HOW TO MANAGE IT”.

1.4. The outputs of coordination

It is common practice for partners to exchange information. The introduction of new bodies into the partnership established by the LSC makes it possible to expand the circuit of information and promote a better knowledge of the resources available in the municipality, thus creating the opportunity to take better advantage of them.

Making both material and human resources available to ensure that the measure operates better is one of the outputs of coordination. Despite the difficulties that remain in terms of social workers in view of the needs of the municipality and the number of claims, it will certainly be possible to triple the resources allocated to implementing the GMI thanks to the LSC. The objective is to involve more partners with a view to reducing the time gap between awarding the benefit and establishing the contract, and providing systematic support for the integration programmes underway. The process of implementing the GMI, however, from meeting those applying to be beneficiaries to preparing the integration programmes and providing support, already goes beyond the limits of the Regional Office, involving obligatory partners and others present on the LSC.

With the aim of reducing the amount of time when beneficiaries do not have a contract, the momentum generated in one of the Parish Councils led to the creation of a Parish Social Committee that was intended to have a multiplier effect by creating the same type of structure in the other parishes of the municipality. The objective is to mobilise all the local actors in each parish and to distribute claims amongst them so that no beneficiary is without an integration programme and so that they are properly supported. In the parish where this process began in May 2000 it was possible to eradicate situations of beneficiaries without an integration programme and without an integration contract, and to review all the benefits granted and the programmes already underway.

A good example of many partners making resources available is the way the parishes provide information and advice to the public, where each one gives a little of what they have by pooling efforts: physical space or funding to rent it, staff, ease of access to IEFP programmes, or a vehicle to transport documents.

Common objectives are defined above all between the partners present on the board.

On the one hand the board is composed mostly of the bodies and people who were already carrying out joint work. Used to working on a project-driven basis in which objectives have to be defined, strategies established and action plans constructed, it was not difficult to reach agreement at this level. With one or two exceptions the partners on the board view the GMI as a priority which is seen as an important instrument for the action that had already been taken – “WE HAD ALREADY DEFINED WORK WITH DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES AS A PRIORITY, THE GMI

WAS CONSISTENT WITH OUR OWN PRIORITIES” – and they also share an understanding of the objectives of the measure, which helps to define joint work.

On the other hand the law framing the establishment of the LSC makes the work objectives of the executive board clear.

The situation regarding the LSC is not as clear cut: “NOT ALL THE PARTNERS HAVE ACCEPTED WHAT THE OBJECTIVES ARE, WHY WE ARE ON THE LSC AND WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO COORDINATE EFFORTS. I THINK THAT ALL THE PARTNERS AGREE WITH THE MEASURE BUT THEY DON’T ALL HAVE THE SAME VIEW OF HOW IT SHOULD BE APPLIED”. The differences, which eventually hinder work on joint objectives, lie in the area of controlling the benefits awarded: “SOME PARTNERS SAY THAT WE’RE FUNDING PEOPLE WHO DON’T NEED IT”. Although all partners can submit allegations to the LSC of the improper award of the GMI benefit (because the beneficiary made a declaration of income that did not correspond to the real situation), the truth is that this discussion has “undermined” the work somewhat. The situation is tending to improve, however: “WE ARE DEFINING PEOPLE’S ROLES WITH THEM AND THEY NOW HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR ROLE AND OF WHAT THEY HAVE TO DO”.

New actions have been taken following joint work identifying needs to respond to the integration plans: the creation of training courses aimed at women who have been out of the labour market for a long time, projects aimed at young people with low levels of education, and support for the creation of self-employment.

The implementation of actions, however, is hindered by obstacles related on the one hand to the complexity of the situations themselves and to the lack of a legal framework for finding alternative responses. At the level of education, for example, reference was often made to the lack of responses for children under the age of 15 who leave school obviously without completing the compulsory nine years’ schooling. These are children who have already broken away from the school system, and in most cases it is unthinkable to make them return, but since they are of school age they cannot be covered by any other type of measure.

These are compounded on the other hand by difficulties related not so much to the lack of personnel for particular projects but to the profile of the personnel to carry them out. This sometimes means that what they have to offer is not very attractive to the population: “YOU MUST HAVE THE RIGHT PROFILE TO WORK WITH THIS POPULATION. IN TERMS OF EDUCATION, TO GIVE CONTINUING EDUCATION CLASSES TEACHERS WITH SOME SENSITIVITY ARE REQUIRED RATHER THAN PLACING TEACHERS BY MEANS OF COMPETITIONS. SOMETIMES PEOPLE WORK AT NIGHT BECAUSE THEY WANT THE MONEY. THEY’VE GOT SOMETHING ELSE DURING THE DAY AND AT NIGHT THERE’S A RUSH TO GIVE CLASSES (...) THERE ARE TEACHERS WHO ARE VERY ACCUSTOMED TO THE TYPE OF TEACHING THEY DO DURING THE DAY AND AT NIGHT THEY REPRODUCE THE SAME CLASSES”.

The transfer of GMI beneficiaries from this type of activity to involvement in more stable structures and in the labour market in particular very often comes up against the absence of certain resources in the municipality. These shortcomings have not yet been overcome and are situated above all at the level of child welfare facilities. A project was recently submitted among applications for the *Ser Criança* programme, however, which aims to create a network of local childcare workers, not only to create jobs in this area but also to facilitate the integration of some parents into the labour market.

1.5. The impact of coordination

Up to May 2000 the Matosinhos LSC had approved 3 486 GMI claims, corresponding to 11 058 beneficiaries (around 7% of the resident population). A total of 473 contracts had been signed at the time.

Two months usually elapse between the claim and payment of the first benefit. Preparation of the programme and signature of the integration contract is dependent on how close the family is to the services, and how well they are known to the social services personnel. Matosinhos initially experienced administrative problems that meant that the GMI social action service did not know the families who had already been awarded the benefit by the Social Security schemes. There are also families who have been receiving the benefit for a year without signing a contract, which demotivates them at the time of preparing the programme and fosters conflict between beneficiaries.

Some partners suggest that the benefit should be awarded only after carrying out the integration programmes, but others argue that problems could be exacerbated for people and families facing severe difficulties. The negative consequences of a long time gap until the contract is signed also give the public a poor image of the GMI, which means that some partners who are more influenced by public opinion place great emphasis on the need for greater control and monitoring of the measure.

The establishment of local multidisciplinary teams mobilised by the Parish Councils themselves, which has already been tried out in Perafita, seems to be a solution. In this parish all beneficiaries have been asked to begin preparing the programme and the amount of all benefits have been reviewed, if the initial situation of the family has changed, which leads the person in charge to assert: "ALL IN ALL IT'S CHEAPER TO TAKE SOMEONE ON TO DO THE PROGRAMMES AND SUPPORT THE FAMILIES THAN IT IS TO PAY BENEFITS WRONGLY". The Social Network, in which Matosinhos is one of the 40 Municipalities in the experimental stage, is seen as a very important means for helping to stimulate the creation of these teams.

A multidisciplinary approach and getting very close to the ground at neighbourhood level is something that has now been achieved by at least one of the partners. Here minimum income families benefit from a tried and tested working method which is applied to these and other needy families. Because of the diversity and severity of their problems some of these have been "classified" as "families requiring systematic work". There is a technical team composed of case-workers, family workers and a psychologist who support these families on an almost weekly basis, which involves visiting them at home, providing psychological support for some of the family or family therapy sessions, or working on particular subjects such as hygiene, food, etc.. There are other less problematic families who, since they are covered by specific actions, require more sporadic support every two months or so.

Although there are not many of them compared to the number of claims, beneficiaries who have signed contracts are thus provided with support, which means that the percentage of unfulfilled integration programmes is very low, as is the percentage of unsigned programmes: "THE FACT THAT WE HAVE TEAMS VERY CLOSE TO THE GROUND AND THAT WE KNOW THE POPULATION WELL MEANS THAT WE KNOW HOW FAR WE CAN GO, SO WE CAN ESTABLISH MORE SHORT-TERM AND ACHIEVABLE ACTIONS". On the other hand there is an awareness that discourse and action have to be adapted to different groups. In relation to Romany families, for example, "THEIR CULTURAL VALUES HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT".

Although some institutions require a commitment from people before implementing the GMI, the existence of the integration programmes is seen by all of them as very positive, given that: “NOT ONLY DOES IT MAKE THE USER MORE RESPONSIBLE BUT IT ALSO CREATES GREATER ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE STAFF THEMSELVES”. The CRSS itself states: “IT WAS A VERY QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENT. FAMILIES WERE ALREADY ACCUSTOMED TO APPLYING FOR THE VARIOUS BENEFITS BUT THEY HAD NEVER BEEN ASKED FOR ANYTHING IN EXCHANGE. FOR THE FIRST TIME THEY ARE ASKED TO HAVE AN ACTIVE ATTITUDE AND PROBLEMS ARE RESOLVED JOINTLY, WHEREAS PREVIOUSLY THERE WAS A WELFARE ATTITUDE AND THINGS WERE NOT DEVELOPED IN DEPTH. I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF PROBLEMS WERE RESOLVED BEFORE”.

The way the contracts are signed in turn tends to make the beneficiaries more aware that the GMI involves work in partnership. “MANY BENEFICIARIES DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE ESSENCE OF THE CONTRACT VERY WELL OR THAT WHAT WAS AT ISSUE WAS NOT CASE-WORKER A OR B BUT A RANGE OF IDENTITIES (...) THE FACT THAT THE BENEFICIARY WENT TO THE BOARD TO SIGN THE CONTRACT GAVE THEM A GREATER SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND THE BENEFICIARY MEETS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL SECURITY, HEALTH ETC., AND FROM THE OUTSET THERE IS ALSO CLOSER CONTACT BETWEEN ALL THE SERVICES AND THE PEOPLE. CLEARLY IN THIS CONTEXT IT'S NOT EASY TO HAVE THE CAPACITY TO NEGOTIATE BECAUSE THE RELATIONSHIP IS UNEQUAL – THEY NEED THE BENEFIT AND THEY ARE FACING SOMEONE WHO HAS THE POWER TO GRANT IT, BUT IT DEPENDS ON HOW THE PARTNERS ACT AND HOW THE CASE-WORKER HAS ALREADY DEVELOPED THE ISSUE WITH THE PERSON.”

The areas of health and social action predominate in the integration programmes already prepared in Matosinhos. This is because it was realised that there were children who do not receive medical support. On the other hand there are many people who claim health problems that must be unravelled so as to find out whether they are or are not excused from the vocational integration component the programmes should cover: “SOMETIMES WHAT WE DO IN HEALTH IS UNRAVEL SITUATIONS SO THAT WE CAN NEGOTIATE OTHER ACTIONS”. There are many beneficiaries who really do suffer health problems, however: chronic diseases, drug addiction, hepatitis C, oncological diseases, leukaemia, etc.. Social action meanwhile includes action relating to the need to create the habit of working and to promote the self-esteem and self-image of some beneficiaries. These are furthermore some of the objectives that drive the customised support provided in some cases.

There are some reservations as regards vocational integration: the employment partner acknowledges that “IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO INTEGRATE GMI BENEFICIARIES INTO THE LABOUR MARKET”, due to their low academic and vocational qualifications and the poor coverage of childcare facilities; the trade unions assert that “THE GMI COMES UP AGAINST ONE OF THE REGION'S PROBLEMS: UNEMPLOYMENT”, or also, “INTEGRATION INTO THE LABOUR MARKET IS A FUNDAMENTAL STRUGGLE THAT WILL NOT BE RESOLVED BEFORE THE SITUATION OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE IN THE MARKET IS RESOLVED”.

The increasing insecurity of the labour market is furthermore acknowledged and well-known in the region, necessarily reflected in the type of integration possible for GMI beneficiaries: “THE TYPE OF INTEGRATION THAT HAS OCCURRED IS NOT SATISFACTORY, THEY ARE INSECURE AND TEMPORARY SITUATIONS”.

Various measures have been taken to make the integration programmes and the social and vocational integration they require viable in Matosinhos: 10 UNIVAs have been created, one in each parish of the municipality; a start-up firm is being set up; three projects have been submitted to the FAINA Programme; and gardening and home economics courses are operating.

Another type of strategy is being developed: a survey of employers is being used to find out what sectors of the economy have more capacity to offer work and what the most appropriate worker profile is for each of them. Meanwhile the Job Centre is focusing on creating new responses for beneficiaries whose level of education is below compulsory schooling.

But what kind of impact does all this have on the life of the beneficiaries themselves?

Maria²⁵: “The minimum income is pure gold”

Maria is 46 years old, she lives with her husband and five young children and also looks after a three-year-old niece. Her husband receives a disability pension of 36 000 escudos (around 180 euro). He stopped working due to health problems, while she says “I HAVEN’T WORKED SINCE I GOT MARRIED, I HAVEN’T SEEN A LOOM SINCE”. When the minimum income was introduced she was in debt, she did not have enough money to pay water and electricity bills or rent. Claiming the GMI was not difficult: “DR. R. FILLED IN THE FORMS FOR ME AND I GOT ALL THE DOCUMENTS, THERE WAS A SACKFUL”. She waited almost a year to get it “BUT THEN IT ALL CAME TOGETHER”. Since the technical team of one of the partners knew her it was not long before the contract was signed: “I HAD TO PAY MY DEBTS BUT WE MADE AN AGREEMENT, THEY HELP A LITTLE AND SO DO I: EVERY MONTH I PAY OFF 5 000 ESCUDOS TOWARDS THE RENT I OWED”. The 36 000 escudos GMI she receives “IS ALMOST AS MUCH AS MY HUSBAND’S PENSION”, it provides enough “TO EAT AND TO HAVE SOME SORT OF A LIFE”. But Maria’s greatest satisfaction as regards the cash benefit the GMI gives her access to was “THE FLOOR TILES” she put in the house.

In addition to this Maria has gone back to school (she did not have the first cycle of basic education): “IN THE MORNING I DO THE HOUSEWORK, I LEAVE EVERYTHING IN ORDER, I SEND THE CHILDREN OFF TO SCHOOL AND LEAVE MY HUSBAND WITH MY NIECE AND AT 3 O’CLOCK I GO”, and “I’M VERY PLEASED AND SO IS MY TEACHER. I’M LEARNING WELL (...) I’M ON HOLIDAY JUST NOW BUT I’M FED UP OF BEING AT HOME”.

Vera: “I’d really like to do a dressmaking course”

Vera is a 32 year old widow with six children, though only three of them live with her. Widowhood caused very serious financial problems. Because of her low income she had to go to live with a sister-in-law in a “VERY SMALL ROOM” for which she (still) pays 45 000 escudos (225 euro); the room has no privacy and what’s more “SHE WANTS TO COOK BUT SHE CAN’T”. When she went to the Social Security it was to ask for help to find a house; she was working at the time - “I’D ALWAYS WORKED IN RESTAURANTS. NOW I EARN 500 ESCUDOS AN HOUR”. When they told her to claim the GMI: “I SAID STRAIGHTAWAY THAT I WAS WORKING” in the interview she had not long ago (with the executive board); she was pleased with the attitude of the case-workers, “THERE WERE SIX OR SEVEN OF THEM”, who excused her from the integration programme. “IT’S NOT THAT I WOULD’N’T LIKE TO STUDY, I’D REALLY LIKE TO DO A DRESSMAKING COURSE”, but her working hours prevented it. In this case the GMI is an essential financial supplement: at the moment she gets 58 000 escudos, plus her wage of 500 escudos an hour, “AND THEN I HAVE TO PAY 45 000 ESCUDOS RENT PLUS 8 000 ESCUDOS FOR THE NURSERY, PLUS WATER AND LIGHT AND FOOD FOR THE CHILDREN”.

²⁵ All the names of GMI beneficiaries whose cases are presented here are false.

1.6. Preliminary conclusions

“In the Matosinhos LSC there’s a certain harmony (...) in controlling the beneficiaries”. There is a certain harmony among partners in the Matosinhos LSC towards the measure and its objectives, which is reflected in the virtually unanimous assertion that the GMI is a priority measure for the organisations each interviewee represents. The political complicity between the different Parish Councils and between the latter, the Municipal Council and the Government, which is potentially shared by some of the representatives/those responsible for other organisations, certainly facilitates the implementation of the measure and its priority nature but does not silence all dissent. Despite political convergence, some differences arise among the partners of the LSC between those who see the measure as an important instrument of social action and those who are essentially concerned with controlling beneficiaries.

With the creation of the Parish Social Committee the dynamism of one of the agents of local power has shown, however, that good exploitation of local resources and strong concentration on social action minimises or annuls the perverse effects of the measure when there is no support or capacity to prepare integration programmes.

A true culture of partnership could be under construction, although differences between partners continue, based on the existence for just a few of an experience of work in partnership and activities carried out according to a project-driven approach.

Local coordination as regards the GMI allowed decentralisation of information and advisory services, which was favoured by the proximity of some of the latter to the beneficiaries. The momentum created by joint work stimulated the institutions, leading them to submit projects and promote actions so as to implement the integration programmes by mobilising the Training and Employment Programmes.

The GMI is seen by the beneficiaries as a positive measure that meets their specific multiple needs.

There is a significant bottleneck in terms of the human resources allocated to each partner, so that negative effects are created, such as the dependency of beneficiaries on the benefit/refusal of programmes and a cognitive acceptance of the negative image of the measure by the local population.

2. Case study 2: Covilhã

2.1. General presentation

The Guaranteed Minimum Income Local Support Committee of the municipality of Covilhã is formally composed of 58 bodies, some of which are public, such as the local authorities, and others which are private, such as the IPSS – private welfare institutions. The LSC therefore consists of: Covilhã Municipal Council; 17 Parish Councils out of the 31 that compose the municipality; 25 IPSS; two *Misericórdias* (Fundão and Covilhã); one mutual assistance association; the *União de Sindicatos* of Castelo Branco [trade union confederation], affiliated to the CGTP; the UGT; the *Liga Operária Católica* [Catholic Workers’ League]; the *Associação Comercial e Industrial* [Commercial and Industrial Association]; the Regional Branch of the *Instituto Português da Juventude* [Portuguese Institute for Youth]; the *Instituto de Reinserção Social* [Institute for Social Reintegration]; two rural development associations; and one education and vocational training cooperative.

Representatives of the four obligatory partners also form part of the LSC: the Social Security, represented by the coordinator of the LSC, a staff member of the Regional Social Security Office of the Centre (CRSS), Castelo Branco Subregional Service, Covilhã local service; Employment, by a representative of Covilhã Job Centre; Health; and Education, by the person responsible for the municipal coordination of Continuing education in Covilhã, an integral part of Castelo Branco Education Area, which in turn is part of the Regional Directorate of Education of the Centre, Ministry of Education.

The Covilhã LSC is therefore a complex structure, not just because of its size but in particular because of the diversity of its partners, who present/represent distinct interests, which is necessarily reflected in the priority attributed to the measure and the type of cooperation they provide. Although they are equal before the law and the principles of democratic participation, the representatives of the different bodies accept the existence of stronger partners whose distinguishing feature, according to them, is the vigour of their activity in the social sphere. Meanwhile the position of the bodies with regard to the GMI makes it possible to identify those that belong to the LSC for reasons of (political) control, the active partners driven to combat social exclusion, and the passive partners who are there “BECAUSE THEY WERE INVITED”.

This LSC has been organised in various ways in trying to find a more rapid and participatory way of operating. Given the number of partners it is composed of and bearing in mind the difficulties in mobilising them, it was decided to form four groups, the plenary coming together twice per year. This strategy does not appear to have been supported, however: “FOR US (COORDINATION OF THE LSC) IT WAS MORE TIRING, THERE WERE MORE AND MORE MEETINGS AND SINCE ONLY TWO OR THREE PEOPLE ATTENDED WE ENDED UP BY NOT DISCUSSING ANYTHING”. Normal functioning as a plenary was therefore resumed with meetings twice per month, but the serious problem of LSC members failing to attend meetings persisted, so that “THE LSC IS MADE UP OF LITTLE MORE THAN THE PARTNERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD”.

As in any other municipality and as provided for by law, the LSC has its executive board, which in addition to the four obligatory partners also includes a representative of the Municipal Council, a representative of the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* of Covilhã and a representative of the *Associação Promotora do Desenvolvimento Rural Integrado* – Beira Serra [Beira Serra Integrated Rural Development Association]. This board of seven people meets every week to comply with its legally-established responsibilities (see Chapter 3).

The funding of the LSC corresponds to 5% of the sums attributed in the municipality to GMI benefits, but little of this funding was used. In fact only the funds allocated for acquiring computer equipment (one computer) and a fax were applied. The partners therefore do not have any concerns regarding possible funding deficits, though there is an awareness that this available resource is not very effectively used: “IT’S SOMETHING THAT COULD BE EXPLOITED MORE BUT WE (I.E., THE CASE-WORKERS) DON’T HAVE TRAINING IN THAT AREA (I.E., FOR PREPARING BUDGETS) AND THE LSC DOESN’T IDENTIFY ITS NEEDS”.

Difficulties at the level of personnel, marked by the scarcity of social workers, affect not only the private institutions - “THE INSTITUTIONS DON’T HAVE TECHNICAL OR SOMETIMES EVEN ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF, SOMETIMES IT’S THE COOK WHO RUNS A DAY CENTRE” - but also the Regional Social Security Office itself - “THERE ARE FIVE OF US FOR 296 GMI CLAIMS AND FOR ALL THE WORK THAT HAS TO BE DONE IN TERMS OF SOCIAL ACTION, SPREAD OVER 31 PARISHES”. This insufficiency is also reflected in the coordination of the LSC itself, since it is the responsibility of a single person (a staff member of the CRSS), who operates as the leader

of the LSC and the executive board while also being responsible for the internal coordination of her own service and dealing directly with the public.

2.2. Contextualisation

Covilhã is an inland municipality situated close to the Spanish border in the Centre of the country. It is a mountainous area highly characterised by rural life, where primary sector activities are still extremely important – agriculture, forestry and mining – and it also has an industrial centre in the city of Covilhã itself, where the woollen industry is particularly significant. In the 1950s and 1960s this region witnessed intense migratory movements either to the capital (Lisbon), or to other countries in Europe, such as France, Germany or Switzerland, leading to depopulation and the ageing of the population. Establishment of the University of Beira Interior in Covilhã in the 1980s was a strategy designed not only to retain the youngest people but also to attract others and to stimulate the economy.

Traditionally this is a low-income area - low income from agriculture, low wages in industry²⁶ - and this was one of the causes of (e)migration, so that agriculture largely became a supplementary and subsistence activity. The low wages paid in industry meanwhile meant that families had to ensure that all their members were employed from an early age in order to secure their own survival, removing children and school-aged youngsters from school (many of which were difficult to get to), which is now reflected in the low levels of education of the population.

The crisis in textiles in the 1990s and the previous collapse of the Panasqueira mines (wolfram) gave rise to an increase in unemployment that affects the 35 to 50 years of age group in particular, a band that is difficult to reintegrate into the labour market, either due to discrimination by the market itself – “EMPLOYERS ARE NOT WILLING TO ACCEPT PEOPLE WHO ARE ALREADY IN THEIR FORTIES; THEY PREFER YOUNGER PEOPLE” – or due to the low educational and vocational qualifications of the unemployed and difficulties in retraining: “THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE WORKED IN TEXTILES ALL THEIR LIVES AND WHO DON’T KNOW ANYTHING ELSE. AND IF YOU ASK A FORMER WORKER WHAT HE WANTS TO DO HE’LL SAY HE WANTS TO WORK IN A FACTORY, HE DOESN’T WANT TO BE A CARPENTER OR A BRICKLAYER...”

The unemployment that affects those responsible for some families leads young people to join the labour market early: “CRITICAL SITUATIONS BEGAN TO OCCUR OF FAMILIES IN WHICH THE PARENTS COULDN’T FIND A JOB AND THE CHILDREN BEGAN TO WORK VERY EARLY, THEY LEAVE SCHOOL AT 15 AND 16 AND GO INTO THE BUILDING TRADE”. A cycle of low levels of education is therefore passed on from the parents’ generation to their children.

These problems are compounded by alcoholism. The consumption of alcoholic drinks in the early morning was a deeply-rooted habit in rural areas and in the lowest social strata of the population in general. Popular belief had it that it helped provide energy for a hard day's work and “IT STAVED OFF HUNGER”. Alcoholism, with all its consequences, is a problem that affects not only the individual concerned but also the family they are part of. It is not always seen this way, however, and contrary to other dependencies it is viewed with some tolerance.

The geographic isolation of some settlements in the municipality, their dispersion over the territory – “SOME PLACES ARE 60 KM FROM THE CAPITAL OF THE MUNICIPALITY” – the harsh

²⁶ Despite the asymmetries in the region itself, considering a relative poverty rate based on 60% of the average family income, according to Eurostat data for 1996 30.5% of the population resident in the Centre lived below the poverty line.

climate they are subject to in winter and the poor means of communication that have marked this region for decades have contributed to reinforcing a certain social isolation and organisation of civil society so that it finds solutions for some of its problems at local level, the number of private institutions represented on the LSC being an example of this.

Meanwhile this region is affected by political disagreements, disagreements between the different parishes, and disagreements between local and central power, which is clearly reflected in the partners' expectations as regards their presence on the LSC and the way the structure functions. This (latent) conflict of interests, the lack of capabilities of some of the bodies in terms of social action and the lack of (material and human) resources had to some extent already affected the partnership established at the time of an anti-poverty project run in the municipality under the Community Programme for the Economic and Social Integration of the Least Privileged Groups, generally called Poverty 3, and involving some of the 31 parishes. Despite facilitating acquaintances between some staff of some agencies, this experience does not seem to have facilitated the process of constructing the current coordination.

2.3. The process of change

The changes arising from the functioning of a structure such as the Local Support Committee are slow and perhaps not yet very visible, given that the measure has only been applied for a short time. The interviews carried out, however, identify some rather significant changes.

The first one of note arises at the level of breaking the isolation of some institutions, particularly private ones. Some of them focus on charitable activity, but their staff does not include personnel trained in the social field. In the partners as a whole, excluding the CRSS, there are only two case-workers and two childcare workers. Although there is a more or less ad hoc coordination between some private institutions, particularly between the latter and the public sector, they each act for themselves, very often without having a notion of the global nature of the problems. "VERY OFTEN THE ASSOCIATIONS ARE RUN BY PARTICULAR PEOPLE WITH PARTICULAR THOUGHTS AND ATTITUDES, WHO WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH TO TRY TO GET ROUND THE SITUATION. THAT'S WHY I SAY THAT IT WILL NEVER BE DUE TO BAD FAITH BUT DUE TO PEOPLE'S LACK OF EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING, WHICH LEADS TO SOME ASSOCIATIONS BEING RATHER UNRECEPTIVE TO THIS TYPE OF PROJECT".

Implementation of the GMI and above all the creation of the LSC and its board "obliged" the institutions generally to open up to the exterior, and also favoured a certain raising of the awareness of their workers and managers towards particular problems and their gradual mobilisation around them.

This opening up also allowed people who would more easily be left out of the process to be involved in other forms of action, such as members of the local Romany community, whose cooperation has been requested in particular situations, giving rise to the creation of intermediaries among this community and their recognition by everyone.

Meanwhile the GMI has highlighted certain social problems, particularly situations of severe economic hardship. This is due not only to it being publicised as a social right for the most needy, but also due to joint work between different agencies. "WHEN THE GMI WAS ADOPTED GENERALLY THERE WAS A GREAT FLOOD OF CLAIMS INTO THE SOCIAL SECURITY" from people who were not known to the services. Some of these were rejected because the families did not fall within the criteria defining the GMI beneficiary, despite having social problems, so they

were channelled into social action, and for this very reason the number of claims in this section increased as well. In another way the partners have also tried to identify those who, although eligible according to the GMI criteria, have not yet applied for it, thereby seeking to avoid the so-called “poverty trap” – “THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO GO TO MY COLLEAGUES (TEACHERS) TO COMPLAIN IN THE ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES BECAUSE THEY HAVE PARTICULAR DIFFICULTIES AND THEY DON’T APPLY FOR THE GMI – THERE IS A SITUATION OF CONCEALED POVERTY”.

In the Covilhã area the GMI and its functioning on the LSC has therefore mobilised civil society around the issues of poverty and social exclusion and has provided a greater understanding of these phenomena as everyone's responsibility. Although, as stated previously, the changes at this level are somewhat slow, being much more visible among the partners of the executive board than on the LSC itself, there has certainly been a transformation in attributing the responsibilities of a would-be global social action. “IN THE PAST EVERYTHING CONNECTED TO POVERTY USED TO BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY, THERE WAS NO ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS BY THE OTHER BODIES BECAUSE THE SITUATIONS WEREN’T PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD EITHER. AT THE MOMENT I THINK THAT DESPITE ALL THE ERRORS AND ALL THE DIFFICULTIES THE GMI HAS BEEN VERY POSITIVE AT THIS LEVEL”.

At the level of working methods too some changes have occurred that clash to some extent with former practice. Firstly the institutions (of the board) meet every week, so space and time have to be found for this; secondly, this meeting involves joint discussion of claims and a joint search for answers. “THE GMI BROUGHT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP. PREVIOUSLY EACH INSTITUTION ACTED IN ISOLATION, BUT NOW THE WORK IS MORE CO-ORDINATED. THIS MEASURE MOTIVATED THE PUBLIC BODIES AND NOT ONLY THEM TO WANT TO DECIDE THINGS IN COOPERATION RATHER THAN ON THEIR OWN”.

Despite all the difficulties – which largely involve shortcomings in available human resources – responses have certainly been created that had not been tried out before, such as a course on marketing techniques aimed at the Romany population; and a continuing education evening course aimed mainly at women with the functioning in parallel of a classroom, run by Ministry of Education childcare workers, with activities geared towards the children of people attending the classes.

Greater and easier access to particular information, such as the programmes promoted by the IEFP and available in the Job Centre of the area, have not only allowed these programmes to be exploited better (Start-Up Companies; Workshop-Schools, for example), but have also created greater momentum and greater response capacity in some organisations when they mobilise to prepare applications for these programmes as a way of generating resources for GMI beneficiary integration contracts.

This type of functioning has also contributed to qualifying the services of certain institutions, and the process of accrediting at least one of them as a training agency is underway ²⁷. It is, however, the institutions that already showed signs of greater dynamism and that also identify more closely with the objectives of the measure and of concerted work which are experiencing this increasing dynamism more intensely.

As an active measure, due to the integration programme and contract, the GMI has helped to shift the emphasis from welfare and unilateral activity towards more holistic action encompassing the problems as a whole felt by individuals and families, including health, education, housing and employment. For some people this is the “natural” continuation of the

²⁷ At the moment if an organisation wishes to run vocational training programmes in Portugal financed either by the European Social Fund or the Portuguese state, they have to draw up an accreditation file to be submitted to INOFOR, a Ministry of Labour and Welfare agency, for their capacities as a training body to be recognised or not.

work already carried out in traditional social action; for others it means a complete transformation, paving the way for greater efficiency: “BEFORE I THOUGHT THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROVIDED SPORADIC, SUPPLEMENTARY SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY”.

The question remains, however, of how far the integration programme is seen by partners as a way of making the users responsible, rather than a form of also making their own institutions responsible in terms of carrying actions out. This seems to be a question that is raised in particular by the members of the LSC who are not part of the executive board. Here in particular it is the individuals and families who seem to be blamed for failures of integration, which is seen above all from the point of view of “workfare”.

For some partners, in fact, the objective of the GMI and the integration programmes is to integrate individuals into the labour market, without considering their original situation – state of health (physical or mental), level of education, level of vocational qualification, etc. – frequently making reference to the obligatory nature the measure should have at the level of integration into work: “GMI PEOPLE SHOULDN’T REALLY BE FORCED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES, BUT ALMOST”; “THE MONEY COMES OUT OF THE COMMUNITY, WHOEVER USES IT SHOULD GIVE SOMETHING BACK”.

This type of position, however, has not been mirrored in terms of carrying actions out in the area of employment and training with a view to facilitating the occupational integration of beneficiaries. There are also cases in which the population benefiting from the GMI is not covered, even when such action is implemented, leaving the executive board with much fewer opportunities to act.

The following comments by interviewees should be noted in this respect:

- “SOMETIMES THEY ARE PEOPLE WHO DON’T HAVE TRAINING FROM THE SOCIAL POINT OF VIEW, SO IT’S MORE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO UNDERSTAND PROBLEMS OF A SOCIAL NATURE (...) IN THE IPSS IT’S NOT ONLY THE SOCIAL ASPECT THAT’S IMPORTANT, IT’S ECONOMIC ISSUES, POLITICAL ISSUES...”
- “WE HAVE VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS WHICH ARE PARTNERS OF THE LSC AND WHICH CARRY OUT VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND WHICH VERY OFTEN DON’T EVEN ASK US IF THERE ARE GMI BENEFICIARIES WHO CAN TAKE PART IN THAT TRAINING”.
- “THE TRADE UNION FEDERATION IS OUR PARTNER ON THE LSC AND IT RUNS VARIOUS COURSES, AND NOT LONG AGO WE HAD TO SEND AN OFFICIAL LETTER ASKING FOR A LIST OF PEOPLE WHO WERE ATTENDING THEM TO SEE WHETHER SOME OF THEM WERE GMI PEOPLE; AFTER ANALYSING THEM WE REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT THERE WERE ONLY TWO BENEFICIARIES, WHO HAD CANCELLED THE BENEFIT MEANWHILE”.
- “THERE ARE BODIES THAT ARE NOT LIKELY TO CONTRIBUTE MUCH TO THEIR INTEGRATION (OF GMI BENEFICIARIES), BECAUSE THEY SAY THEY ARE PROBLEMATIC PEOPLE, WITHOUT THE WHEREWITHAL, THEY AREN’T PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WORK”.
- “WE HAVE THESE MEASURES: START-UP FIRMS, OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAMMES; SPECIAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES; SO THEY EXIST, BUT SOMETIMES THERE’S A LACK OF PROJECTS FOR PEOPLE (GMI BENEFICIARIES) TO BE INTEGRATED. IN OTHER WORDS, THERE HAVE TO BE PARTICULAR AGENCIES APPLYING AND THIS DOESN’T HAPPEN. AND IT DOESN’T HAPPEN BECAUSE AFTER HAVING THE PEOPLE THERE THEY SAY THAT THEY’RE NOT INTERESTED, THAT THEY’RE ABSENT A LOT.”

The executive board of the GMI in Covilhã, certainly like many others in other parts of the country, is thus faced with the pressing need to carry out or to promote more than direct work

with the beneficiaries with a view to their independence and their integration process. It is necessary to know how to develop intense awareness raising and training for the various social organisations in the municipality that will lead them to understand poverty as a social process, accepting their (co)responsibility in creating responses for problems and an activity that makes it possible to put an end to the processes of exclusion created due to the institutions' discriminatory and not very inclusive attitudes.

The process of changing these institutions is therefore (as yet) incomplete. Functioning in a structure such as the LSC has contributed towards this since, as pointed out above, it favours the openness of the institutions to other ways of thinking and acting. But the change at the level of methodologies and strategic principles of action clashes with the limitations created by the fact that another type of change has not taken place: an increase in human resources to cope with the increase in work and to provide another form of acting, which involves providing closer support and greater autonomy for local services so as to facilitate decision-making.

2.4. The outputs of coordination

In the Covilhã LSC there seems to be a consensus that the form of acting within the GMI is more demanding in terms of time in traditional social action. Since it is a measure that combines the award of a benefit with the preparation of an integration programme, it requires enough time to be able to get a sufficient knowledge of the family (and not only of the individual who claims the benefit) so as to outline the diagnosis that will form the basis of the programme. It also requires time for attending meetings of partners of the board in which cases are presented and discussed. The time demands are also felt in the administrative procedures. Since it is a measure access to which is limited by particular criteria laid down by law, it involves the completion of forms and the submission of documents which are subsequently duly analysed in the light of the criteria, giving rise to approvals or rejections.

It is on the other hand a measure that is more demanding from the point of view of technical skills in preparing good integration programmes adapted to each specific case, and it also requires negotiating skills - with the partners and with the beneficiaries themselves.

These time demands are also in turn limited by the human resources allocated to the measure. Implementation of the GMI also allowed new staff to join the Social Security, following a "freeze" of several years, leading some services to a state of virtual collapse. It is often said in Covilhã, however, as in the other places studied, that insufficient resources were injected. The expectations of political leaders with respect to the establishment of the GMI were that the creation of the LSC would allow partners to make their own personnel available, thus allowing them to be used to better advantage and allowing synergies to be created.

While it is true that the partners have made some of their staff available to attend meetings of the board (and of the LSC) and to participate in assessing cases, it is also true that, besides the CRSS case-workers, only another two or three institutions employ personnel with training in the social area. This has repercussions on implementing active actions/programmes and on the individualised support of some beneficiaries.

Thus when it is said that human resources should be made available the response tends to be that "you can't make available what doesn't exist". When on the other hand the possibility of taking more advantage of these resources is raised interviewees state: "IT'S MORE THAN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THEM ISN'T IT? PEOPLE OFTEN GIVE MORE THAN THEY CAN. I HAVE TO

STAY IN THE JOB CENTRE AND WORK OVERTIME TO BE ABLE TO GO TO THE MEETINGS OF THE BOARD EVERY WEEK”. Making resources available is therefore based not so much on the involvement of the bodies, though they are obligatory partners, or on restructuring them to face new challenges; it entails above all the availability and personal involvement of the staff themselves.

The sharing of information is an important element in the functioning of the executive board, but it does not extend to the LSC. Within the board information on beneficiaries circulates and information is exchanged on the progress of their integration programmes and on the activities of each organisation present, whether in the context of the GMI or otherwise. This is furthermore an essential step in defining objectives and implementing joint actions, and the widest gap between the LSC and the executive board of the municipality of Covilhã perhaps lies in this sharing of information. Access for some LSC partners to a particular type of information has a function simply of control, not control as a possible synonym for supporting the integration programmes, but political control of the application of the measure, which in turn leads to a distinction between “the poor who deserve it” and “the poor who don’t deserve it”: “ *‘THIS ONE DESERVES THE GMI, THAT ONE DOESN’T’*, HAS OFTEN BEEN THE CASE IN RURAL AREAS WHERE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD KNOWS EVERYONE SO IT’S DECIDED THERE. AND THEN THERE’S THE *PARTY POLITICAL QUESTION: ‘THIS BLOKE SUPPORTS SUCH AND SUCH A PARTY, HE DOESN’T DESERVE A THING’* ”.

If the information circulates between different bodies by means of the presence of their representatives on the executive board by way of horizontal coordination, however, it does not always reach the internal circuits of each organisation and may be “imprisoned” in those that hold it: “AS REGARDS CONTACT WITH OTHER STAFF (OF THE INSTITUTION ITSELF), THAT’S WHERE THINGS GET COMPLICATED (...) IT’S PROBABLY THE STRUCTURE THAT’S VERY HEAVY”.

The definition of joint objectives seems to be a reality on the board. In defining the responsibilities of the board the legal framework itself²⁸ that regulates the process of setting up the local support committees and the way they are organised and function contributes towards this. On the other hand the fact that some of these responsibilities lie in very practical matters, such as defining the means of processing how GMI beneficiaries are dealt with, the “assessment of potential integration programmes, particularly as regards their appropriateness and enforceability in relation to each case”, the signing of agreements and the development of actions and the obtention of resources with a view to making the programmes effective, seems to leave no doubt about the role of the board and the respective partners.

The way in which relationships between the various members of the executive board develop, their commitment to the social aspect and their participation in terms of understanding what the objectives of the GMI are facilitate the work on common objectives: “THERE’S A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THESE MEASURES AND PROJECTS ARE”; “WE ALL WORK IN THE SOCIAL FIELD, WE GET ON VERY WELL; WHAT’S MORE, WE HAVE A RELATIONSHIP THAT GOES BACK TO THE PILOT PROJECT AND THERE’S A VAST KNOWLEDGE OF THE REAL SITUATION IN THE MUNICIPALITY AND WE WERE ALREADY INVOLVED IN OTHER PROJECTS, SO THERE’S A GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVERYONE”. This relationship means that a true partnership is established on the board that goes beyond the work carried out in joint meetings and that even facilitates the decision-making process: “MEMBERS OF THE BOARD DON’T HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE NEXT MEETING TO GET THINGS DONE”.

²⁸ Decree Law 164 – A/97 of 27 June.

This form of working does not extend to the LSC as a whole, however. The lack of participation of partners (at meetings that were supposed to be attended by all 58 bodies an average of 10 partners were present, seven of whom belonged to the board), and the failure of some of them to identify with the principles and objectives of the GMI – “WHAT’S AT STAKE FOR THEM IS NOT SOCIAL INTEGRATION, IT’S KNOWING WHETHER THE PEOPLE DESERVE OR DON’T DESERVE THE GMI”; “THERE ARE PARTNERS WHO MAY NOT FIND THE MEASURE IMPORTANT (...) THERE’S A CERTAIN APATHY, OR THERE ARE POLITICAL ISSUES, BECAUSE THEY ARE VERY CONCERNED WITH THIS” – are factors that make work on common objectives difficult, since they do not exist or they are difficult to identify.

Meanwhile some partners’ lack of training in the social area and a certain difficulty in understanding and realising what the responsibilities of the LSC are seem to be other key factors in the lack of effective coordination at LSC level. How is it that bodies that were very closed up for a long time, focusing on charitable activity, responding on a case-by-case basis according to demands arising, manage without going through a process of apprenticeship to carry out a “needs assessment” and to draw up (annual) action plans that seek to develop the integration programmes? Some inequality in the technical background of the partners could also inhibit more active participation - “THERE ARE ALWAYS PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE GIFT OF EXPRESSING THEMSELVES AND OF CLARIFYING PROBLEMS MUCH MORE EASILY AND GETTING OTHERS TO SUPPORT THEM”.

The lack of joint objectives that guide the activity of the LSC prevents it from defining the priorities necessary and from implementing joint activities that can lead to the creation of new resources. The assessment of the work is non-existent, in the extreme, “BECAUSE THERE IS NO WORK TO ASSESS”, but on the other hand there is also no concern to reflect on the process or to seek better strategies to overcome obstacles that are perhaps not seen as such. Assessment thus merely becomes a bureaucratic exercise that the partners do not respond to: “LAST DECEMBER I ASKED ALL THE PARTNERS WHO CAME TO THE MEETING TO FILL IN AN ASSESSMENT FORM THAT THE IDS SENT. APART FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ONLY ONE OTHER INSTITUTION COOPERATED”.

Although the board is limited by a not very participatory LSC it does define its priorities and it has made progress in implementing new actions, particularly those developed in the area of Education: there are almost 50 continuing education courses operating, involving 144 GMI beneficiaries. The definition of priorities and the need to create new resources, however, comes up against the previously mentioned obstacles:

- ? the existence of insufficient staff to carry out some actions in each partner organisation, or poor organisation of services: “SINCE THERE ARE SO MANY PRIORITIES IT’S SOMETIMES DIFFICULT FOR US TO ESTABLISH WHAT THEY ARE”;
- the weak decision-making capacity of the board due to the lack of autonomy of some of its representatives: “WHEN THE COUNCIL MEMBER ATTENDED, FOR EXAMPLE, HE JUST LISTENED TO THE PARTNERS AND GAVE HIS REPORTS, BUT AFTERWARDS HE COULDN’T RESOLVE OR DECIDE ANYTHING”;
- the bureaucratic process by means of which decision-making is processed within each service. In other words, even if the senior people in charge do not usually override the opinion/decision of the staff member, a procedure has to be followed: “A STAFF MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR A PARTICULAR PROJECT HAS PARTIAL AUTONOMY AND CAN TAKE MINOR DECISIONS, BUT THE MAJOR ONES ALWAYS LIE WITH THE SENIOR MEMBER”; “THIS ISN’T THE FIRST GMI CASE THE INSTITUTION HAS RECEIVED BUT I DON’T DECIDE ON MY OWN, THE CASE IS ALWAYS SUBMITTED TO THE SUPERVISOR”.

2.5. The impact of coordination

Despite the gulf between the LSC and the executive board the work on the latter has had some impact, both on the functioning of the services and on beneficiaries themselves.

296 minimum income cases had been accepted in Covilhã by the end of June 2000, involving 917 people. Integration programmes were underway and the respective contracts had been signed in 270 of these cases. An average of around three months elapsed before the beneficiary started to receive the cash benefit, i.e., between their claim being accepted and the contract being signed. This does not mean that work with the family does not begin immediately, however: “PREVIOUSLY I PREPARED A PROGRAMME AS SOON AS I MET THE USER FOR THE FIRST TIME, KNOWING THAT THE PROGRAMME COULD BE ALTERED, BUT THEN THERE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ANY RESPONSE, SO THEY MADE US WORK WITH THE FAMILY FIRST AND THEN WE TOOK THEM TO THE BOARD TO SEE WHAT THE CHANCES WERE, AND THE CONTRACTS WERE ONLY SIGNED AFTERWARDS. CLEARLY SOME TIME HAS TO ELAPSE”.

Some partners at least only sign the integration contract when there is a possibility that the person can be immediately integrated in an action that seeks to fulfil the objectives advocated in the programme, and this good relationship between cases accepted and integration contracts signed could therefore mean that the capacity to give rapid responses did in fact exist.

The need for rapid action, however, once again clashes with the rigidity of some structures and programmes: “IN EDUCATION, PROGRAMMES ARE DETERMINED FROM ABOVE, WE GET HALF WAY THROUGH THE YEAR AND NOBODY CAN GET IN, THAT’S JUST THE WAY IT IS. IN THE JOB CENTRE THE ANSWERS ARE JUST THE SAME AND THERE’S NO GETTING AWAY FROM THAT...[HOWEVER]”; however, the need to take action in situations that so often require an immediate response is jeopardised and some partners complain of a certain ineffectiveness in the process: “A LOT OF TIME IS WASTED IN MEETINGS (...) DECISIONS HAVE TO BE QUICKER”.

In the Covilhã executive board priority has been given to education, not only because the beneficiaries are generally characterised by lower levels of education but also because “PARTICULAR SOCIAL SKILLS ARE VERY OFTEN LEARNED IN EXTRA MURAL EDUCATION”.

The question raised is: what will happen to these beneficiaries after they have gone through education, will they find a place in the labour market? Even inclusion in vocational training courses is not easy: “WE ARE NOT SEEING APPROPRIATE RESPONSES BECAUSE STRICT CRITERIA IN SELECTING TRAINEES, SCHEDULING COURSES AND TIMETABLING PERSIST”. The normal labour market is also not very responsive to integrating this type of person: “IF THERE WERE SOME TAX INCENTIVE FOR COMPANIES THAT ACCEPT GMI BENEFICIARIES, MAYBE EMPLOYERS WOULD BE MORE MOTIVATED TOWARDS THIS PROJECT”. Part of the solution may lie in the social economy: “SOME IPSS ARE MORE OPEN TO THE INTEGRATION OF PARTICULAR RISK GROUPS THAN TRADITIONAL COMPANIES ARE”.

But the difficulties in terms of integration go beyond problems with vocational integration and also lie in the lack of structures for treating drug addicts or alcoholics, for example.

The cases presented below illustrate some of the difficulties highlighted and the importance of the GMI in situations of extreme hardship.

Matilde: “I’m going to finish school”

Matilde is 32 and lives with her husband and a son who is in the seventh year at school. Matilde was unemployed; she used to work in the textile industry and had been unemployed for a long time; her husband's irregular work did not help the family's situation. When she heard about the GMI she went to the Social Security: “IT TOOK QUITE A LONG TIME TRAIPSING HERE AND THERE TO GET THE PAPERWORK TOGETHER, BUT WITH HELP I MANAGED IT”. Her integration programme involves attending a literacy course, and this has allowed her to finish the first cycle of basic education (fourth class): “I DID THE FOURTH CLASS LAST YEAR, I WAS FINE FOR THE FIRST TIME AND NOW I’M DOING THE FIFTH AND SIXTH YEARS IN ONE YEAR”. She believes that schooling can “HELP HER FOR MANY THINGS. FOR A JOB, FOR EXAMPLE, BECAUSE THERE WAS ONE I PUT THE PAPERWORK IN FOR BUT I DIDN’T GET IT BECAUSE I DIDN’T HAVE THE SIXTH YEAR”. Two months ago the Job Centre managed to place her as a kitchen assistant in a restaurant: “I’D ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A KITCHEN ASSISTANT”. When she got the job she stopped receiving the benefit and thought she wouldn't complete the course, but then “I THOUGHT NO! THERE ARE ONLY FOUR MONTHS LEFT AND I’M GOING TO FINISH IT. THEY’RE GOING TO CUT THE GMI BUT I’M GOING TO FINISH SCHOOL (...) I’VE SACRIFICED A LOT, I’VE BEEN RUNNING AROUND A LOT BUT I’M VERY HAPPY AND MAYBE I CAN GO AS FAR AS THE NINTH YEAR”.

Susana: “It got me out of the gutter”

Susana is 23 years old and lives alone with her husband; she has a daughter who is living with her grandparents. After working in Spain for a while they had to come back because of her husband's health, and she went to live in a bed and breakfast. She couldn't find a house or a job and money was running out, until she had to “GO TO LIVE IN THE ABANDONED SHACKS AT THE LEVEL CROSSING, WE HAD NO MONEY, WE HAD NO WORK, WE GOT NO HELP FROM ANYBODY”. That was when she went to the Social Security and applied for the GMI, which they were awarded after three months.

When the GMI came the first thing she did was rent a house. As regards the integration programme, Susana thinks that “IT’S A WAY FOR PEOPLE NOT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE. THE GMI ISN’T RETIREMENT, AND OBVIOUSLY PEOPLE SHOULD BECOME PART OF SOCIETY”. Actions in her integration programme include the involvement of her husband in a literacy course, and then in an “arts course”; as for her, “THEY EVEN ASKED ME IF I WANTED TO FINISH THE TENTH YEAR, SINCE I HADN’T COMPLETED IT, BUT THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE MONEY FROM THE GMI ISN’T VERY MUCH AND I’D MUCH PREFER A JOB OR A COURSE THAT WOULD GIVE ME MORE OPPORTUNITY TO INTEGRATE”.

She did a kitchen assistant's course for two months and then managed to get a job with the *Misericórdia*. At first it was not easy to integrate: “MY HUSBAND IS A GYPSY, I HAD LEFT MY DAUGHTER WITH MY PARENTS AND... YOU KNOW HOW IT IS, STRAIGHT AWAY ITS ‘MOTHER WHO ABANDONS HER DAUGHTER’ ”.

The problems that arose because of this in relations with her work colleagues almost made her give up, but “MY CASE-WORKER AND DR. N. GAVE ME A LOT OF STRENGTH”. Susana thinks that “IF IT WASN’T FOR THE GMI I’D PROBABLY STILL BE WAITING FOR A JOB (...) WE’RE PRIORITY PEOPLE”. When she started to receive the GMI she met her case-worker every week: “A PRECISE PERSON, EVEN PSYCHOLOGICALLY, AND THEN AT FIRST I DIDN’T KNOW HOW TO MANAGE MY MONEY, HALF OF IT WENT STRAIGHT AWAY ON THE RENT... THEN MY ASSISTANT

GAVE ME A TALK ABOUT HOW TO ORGANISE MYSELF BETTER AND EVEN ABOUT FOOD AND EVERYTHING...”. “THE GMI GOT ME OUT OF THE GUTTER”.

2.6. Preliminary conclusions

“The Covilhã LSC is therefore a complex structure, not just because of its size but in particular because of the diversity of its partners, who present/represent distinct interests, which is necessarily reflected in the priority given to the measure and the type of cooperation they provide. Although they are equal before the law and the principles of democratic participation, the representatives of the different bodies accept the existence of stronger partners whose distinguishing feature, according to them, is the vigour of their activity in the social sphere. Meanwhile the position of the bodies with respect to the GMI makes it possible to identify those that belong to the LSC for reasons of (political) control, the active partners driven to combat social exclusion, and the passive partners who are there “BECAUSE THEY WERE INVITED”.

There is a substantial gulf between the LSC and its board, which increasingly mobilises its members and demonstrates a readiness to resolve the problems facing coordination as well as the problems affecting the life of the beneficiaries, while the LSC has a lack of interest in the measure because of objectives that are not always broadly accepted.

In spite of everything the GMI and its functioning on the LSC has mobilised civil society around the issues of poverty.

The lack of human resources in the social area and the technical shortcomings of the largest institution became evident, as did the lack of “vocation” of some of them in working with the least privileged people.

The differences in relation to the GMI, some of which persist due to the need for political control, accentuate the idea that there are “those who deserve it” and those “who don't”, and the right to a benefit is questioned, stressing the need for a subjective assessment based on discriminating criteria.

The number of programmes signed seems to show that cases are assessed and integration programmes are prepared quite quickly. The prevalence of actions in the area of education illustrates the need to qualify human resources and strong dynamism on the part of one of the partners.

The cases presented show that a range of services has been made available to beneficiaries, and that the latter are not dependent on the benefit.

3. Case study 3: Amadora

3.1. General presentation

In Amadora the Guaranteed Minimum Income Local Support Committee is composed of 23 institutions which, besides the four obligatory partners, include the following: Amadora Municipal Council; eight Parish Councils out of the nine that currently form the municipality; the Amadora *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* and the *UGT – União Geral de Trabalhadores*. The executive board only includes representatives of the obligatory partners and the Municipal Council.

The Amadora LSC has quarterly meetings which are attended irregularly by the partners, while the board meets every week. The LSC is coordinated by a staff member of the Regional Social Security Office (CRSS). Amadora has local information and advisory services overseen by the Subregional Office of Sintra (another municipality in the district of Lisbon), which in turn is part of the Lisboa e Vale do Tejo Regional Social Security Office.

The total amount of the LSC budget, based on 5% of the sums allocated in the municipality, is not known, but 300 000 escudos had been spent from January to May this year. The budget is prepared by the coordinator of the LSC, who submits it to discussion by the partners. After being assessed the budget is submitted to the Sintra Subregional Office for a higher decision. The money was used on facilities, transport and training staff in the CRSS and in LSC partner agencies. Despite personnel difficulties it was not used to pay for new social workers, as occurred in other places.

The Amadora LSC is seriously restricted by the problems it has to deal with and simultaneously hinders progress in resolving them, and the different bodies involved have a very negative view of its functioning.

Firstly the LSC has too many partners – “THE LSC TRAIN IS VERY LONG, IT HAS MANY INSTITUTIONS” – and while the volume and diversity of the problems that affect the municipality of Amadora suggest that a broad range of institutions should participate, such a diversity and complexity of situations seems to transmit a feeling of impotence – “THE MUNICIPALITY IS VERY BIG AND HAS MANY PROBLEMS, PUTTING THEM ALL TOGETHER MEANS OUR HANDS ARE TIED BECAUSE INSTEAD OF HAVING TEN PROBLEMS WE HAVE A THOUSAND”.

This impotence meanwhile highlights a lack of capacity to put some of the decisions taken into practice, making the LSC a body for collective catharsis rather than a structure for mobilising resources and forces capable of finding new responses for the social problems that affect the municipality, particularly the GMI beneficiaries – “WE’VE WHINGED ABOUT OUR LACK OF CAPACITIES RATHER THAN ACTUALLY FINDING SOLUTIONS”; “OBSTACLES ARE PRESENTED CONSTANTLY ON THE LSC AND I FEEL THAT FEW OF THEM ARE OVERCOME”.

The subordination of the Amadora Regional Social Security Office local services to Sintra is one of the hindering factors. For the partners, meanwhile, including the obligatory ones, the GMI does not appear to have the same priority that it has in other Municipalities. This lack of priority attributed to the measure might in some cases not necessarily be negative if it were backed by a position that helped not to stigmatise the beneficiaries – “THERE’S NO PRIORITY. ALL THE FAMILIES THAT SUFFER HARDSHIPS FOR SOME REASON HAVE PRIORITY. NO SPECIAL PROGRAMME WAS MADE JUST FOR THESE USERS, AND I DON’T THINK THAT WOULD BE A GOOD THING EITHER”. The response of the CRSS itself, however, seems to reveal a real gap between the priorities attributed politically to a measure such as the GMI and the actual conditions (and will) to implement it at local level: “WHEN THERE ARE OVER 2 000 CASES, 300 INTEGRATION PLANS AND FIVE STAFF, IT’S CLEARLY NOT A PRIORITY MEASURE”.

3.2. Contextualisation

Amadora is a municipality on the perimeter of the city of Lisbon. It was given the status of a municipality and a city in 1980, following a long-standing claim by its residents in view of the growth of what was then a parish in the municipality of Oeiras.

Amadora is an integral part of the metropolitan area of the capital and experienced very strong growth from the end of the 1950s due to various population flows:

- migrations from other areas of the country, particularly rural populations who sought better living conditions in the Lisbon region. In the case of Amadora a large part of this movement came from the Alentejo, the region of Portugal to the south of the Tagus;
- internal migrations from the district of Lisbon itself, when young couples who had lived there and people with weaker economic resources who were unable to pay the prices demanded for housing had to leave the capital to live in the outskirts;
- international migrations that brought citizens from the Portuguese-Speaking African Countries (PALOP), particularly Cape Verde, to Portugal due to economic hardship or, in the case of Angolans, Mozambicans and more recently Guineans, to escape from war.

According to population estimates Amadora had around 190 000 inhabitants in 1998, 14% of whom were between 15 and 24 years of age and 16% of whom were under 15. The significant presence of people of African origin made Amadora the most African city of Europe. In 1991 the General Population Census counted close to 4 200 individuals who were nationals of one of the PALOP, added to which were those born in one of the former Portuguese colonies and a large number of young Luso-Africans: in the 1997/98 school year over 4 000 students of African origin were enrolled in basic education schools in the municipality of Amadora, including those who had been born in national territory and who have Portuguese nationality.

All these migratory flows swollen by a population with weak economic resources and associated with the lack of a housing policy and a permissive political attitude as regards unauthorised building paved the way for the appearance of countless shanty towns that have gradually become consolidated, giving rise to the so-called “*bairros de alvenaria abarracada*” [brick-hut neighbourhoods]. In 1996 there were 32 districts of this type in the municipality, housing some 2 000 people. Some of these neighbourhoods are truly self-enclosed ethnic enclaves.

Housing problems are the most visible side of other social problems: unauthorised employment; insecure employment; academic underachievement, early drop-out from the education system. In June 1999 10 970 unemployed people were registered with the Job Centre, 50% of whom were long-term unemployed. The low levels of education of this population and the inadequacy of their vocational expectations and qualifications compared to the type of job on offer are some of the factors that make vocational integration in the municipality difficult. There is frequent recourse to the informal economy, and among young people “rotating unemployment” is clearly evident.

The Lisbon Metropolitan Area has experienced growing insecurity which has not been helped by the increase in juvenile crime, and which an alarmist press tends to attribute to the appearance of organised gangs of youths from slums in the outskirts of Lisbon, particularly in the municipality of Amadora. These are often targeted for police raids, which reinforce the negative image of these districts and the people who live there, accentuating their ghettoisation.

Amadora concentrates in a small area both a multicultural population which, besides Africans, includes pockets of Romany families, and a huge range of problems expressed throughout the various parishes of the municipality: some are heavily marked by the strong presence of slums or unauthorised housing in general, with a very young population and great insecurity in employment mostly connected to the building trade; in others problems concern the elderly

with no family support; while in others problems relate to the high price of housing, the effects of which are exacerbated by recent unemployment.

This array of problems and a relative abandonment by central power, due largely to long-standing political differences between the latter and the local authority, has engendered a movement of civil society which has given rise to the establishment of around 40 associations with social aims. This associative movement is characterised by a very neighbourhood-centred (and enclosed) activity which limits a global understanding of the real situation of the municipality.

3.3. The process of change

Virtually no changes have arisen out of the creation of a structure such as the Local Support Committee in Amadora. Following a legal provision the structure was created according to a top-down approach, but in fact it does not function since it does not meet its objectives, highlighting the fact that there are some practices which cannot be changed by decree.

To try to understand where the obstacles to this change lie, the way the institutions make and take decisions will be analysed. Local autonomy is virtually non-existent, despite the tendency to decentralise services in order to get closer to the population. What is certain is that in some institutions this decentralisation goes no further than the information and advisory services, which are not given the powers and responsibilities to take decisions on creating responses to the problems that arise. A strong concentration of decision-making power therefore persists, as if seeking a reason for the existence/permanence of certain hierarchical structures and sometimes promoting a complicated circuit between those who decide and those who carry out.

“THE LSC IS A VERY BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURE: A PROGRAMME HAS TO GO TO SINTRA AND THEN IT NEVER COMES BACK, AND WE GET FED UP; THIS SERVICE SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT LIKE IT USED TO BE”; “I BRING PROBLEMS FROM THE LSC, I HAND THEM OVER TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE HEALTH CENTRE IN THE AREA WHERE THE USER LIVES SO THAT HE CAN WORK ON THEM IN HIS HEALTH CENTRE. THE PROBLEM GOES DOWN THROUGH THE LEVELS UNTIL IT REACHES THE PEOPLE WHO’LL CARRY OUT THE TASK TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM (...). I HAVE AUTONOMY ON THE LSC TO SAY THAT THERE IS FLEXIBILITY IN THE USER’S ACCESS TO THE HEALTH CENTRE, BUT THE OPERATIONAL ASPECTS ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH HEALTH CENTRE”.

Similarly representatives of the private institutions on the LSC are dependent on the senior person in charge: “I HAVE SOME AUTONOMY BUT I’M ALWAYS DEPENDENT ON THE INSTITUTION AND, IF APPLICABLE, THE DIRECTOR”.

The LSC therefore becomes a structure with no capacity to take decisions (and certainly with little influence): “IF THEY’RE ON THE LSC THEY HAVE NO POWER TO TAKE DECISIONS. THE PARTNERS ARE REPRESENTED BY STAFF WHO ARE DEPENDENT ON THEIR INSTITUTION AND THEY CAN’T TAKE DECISIONS”.

Implementation of the GMI and establishment of the LSC were not accompanied by sufficient adaptation of services. As far as increasing the number of social workers is concerned, the Municipal Council contributed in that it made one full-time and one part-time person available for the GMI. The Social Security took on nine new staff who in the end were not channelled towards the GMI, causing the partners to say that the CRSS itself – an obligatory partner forming part of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare – does not give priority to the

measure, and they themselves are therefore not motivated to create more jobs in the social area and to put them at the service of the LSC: “THE PARTNERS DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THE NINE STAFF WHO WERE ADMITTED TO THE LSC AND WHO SHOULD BE IN THE GMI HAD BEEN DIVERTED TO SOCIAL ACTION. THE LSC DID NOT UNDERSTAND THAT VERY WELL” . .

The approximately 3 000 GMI claims are thus distributed (ineffectively) among five Social Security staff and three (part-time) Council staff, which means an average of over 400 claims each. Everyone recognises that the volume of work has increased – the GMI brought people who had never asked for support to the Social Security services: “PEOPLE ASKING FOR THE GMI TURN UP EVERYDAY, THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN SUFFERING HARDSHIP SINCE THE MEASURE WAS IMPLEMENTED IN 1997 BUT THEY ARE ONLY STARTING TO APPLY NOW. THE MEASURE ALSO ATTRACTS PEOPLE WHO HAVE INCOMES THAT DISQUALIFY THEM BUT THEY’VE ALSO GOT TO BE SENT SOMEWHERE”. Meanwhile the demands are greater, due to the need to draw up an integration programme for each family. The services have not satisfied all these demands, however, either as regards the number of persons allocated or the technical development of the social workers: “THE SERVICES ARE NOT STRUCTURED FOR A MEASURE IN WHICH A BENEFIT HAS TO BE AWARDED, A PROGRAMME PRODUCED AND THE RESPECTIVE SUPPORT PROVIDED (...) FEW STAFF ARE DEDICATED EXCLUSIVELY TO THIS MEASURE (...) WE WOULD HAVE TO HAVE TWICE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE”; “THE STAFF ARE NOT TRAINED FOR THIS TYPE OF WORK”; “THE INTEGRATION PLANS WERE NOT CLEARLY DRAWN UP FROM THE BEGINNING”.

The work of the staff builds up - the representatives of education, for example, say: “MORE STAFF WERE NOT TAKEN ON, THERE’S MORE WORK, MEETINGS BUILD UP. THERE WAS NO INCREASE IN MONEY OR LOGISTIC SUPPORT, IT STAYED JUST THE SAME AS BEFORE THE GMI” - and all this means that the people feel “overwhelmed” by the weight of work they have to carry out, and that the work carried out is insufficient, with the necessary consequences in the functioning of the LSC and the executive board - “WE’VE HAD LIMITATIONS IN ACTIVITY DUE TO THE REDUCED NUMBER OF CLAIMS AND THE LIMITED NUMBER OF STAFF TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND TO DEFINE THE INTEGRATION PROGRAMMES”. The feeling of a “vicious circle” has become established: “IF WE DON’T HAVE ANY PLANS SIGNED WE DON’T KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE REQUIRE TRAINING, FOR EXAMPLE, WE DON’T HAVE WORK PREPARED TO BE ABLE TO SAY WHAT PROJECTS AND ACTIONS SHOULD BE CREATED”, and if needs are not identified it is also more difficult to mobilise the partners.

Support systems to facilitate a joint analysis of claims and to contribute to such an identification of needs in terms of programmes and actions have also not been created. Claims are not computerised. Everything is done manually, which not only makes searches extremely slow but also makes anything more than a case-by-case assessment unviable. Failure to computerise information in GMI claims is therefore an obstacle identified by the LSC itself: “WITH THE TIME WE SPEND ON THE GMI IT’S INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE LSC DOESN’T HAVE A COMPUTER SYSTEM YET”; “WE’VE BEEN ASKING FOR COMPUTERISATION FOR OVER A YEAR”.

Underlying this LSC’s failure to operate is a notion of the responsibilities of implementing the minimum income measure and a perception of work in partnership which is not favourable to its development.

Firstly the GMI is understood by all the partners as a measure falling within the ambit of the Social Security. The remaining obligatory partners occupy the second level of responsibilities, followed by the non-obligatory partners represented on the LSC: “THE MEASURE IS STILL OFTEN SEEN AS BELONGING TO THE CRSS RATHER THAN TO EVERYONE”; “THE QUESTION OF THE PARTNERSHIPS IS NOT CLEAR TO EVERYONE, THE CULTURE OF PARTNERSHIP EXISTS VERY

MUCH IN THEORETICAL TERMS BECAUSE IN PRACTICAL TERMS PEOPLE DON'T ACCEPT IT. WHAT I SEE ON THE LSC IS THAT MANY PARTNERS STILL THINK THE GMI IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CRSS, AND IT IS THE CRSS THAT HAS TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS; MAYBE THE FACT THAT THE LSC IS BEING CO-ORDINATED BY SOMEONE FROM THE SOCIAL SECURITY REINFORCES THIS SITUATION"; "THE FOUR OBLIGATORY PARTNERS END UP BY PARTICIPATING, BUT THEY HAVE MORE TO OFFER AND MORE ALTERNATIVES"; "THEY HAVE MORE INFORMATION CHANNELS AND ACCESS TO OTHER PEOPLE AND TO OTHER MEANS WHICH PERHAPS THE IPSS DO NOT HAVE".

Meanwhile if the partners have this attitude and if this attitude is received with apprehension by the CRSS staff, up to what point is this based on a centralising attitude by the services of the Regional Office itself, simultaneously helping to create a negative image of its services and to remove responsibility from the different partners? "THERE WERE PROPOSALS TO COMPUTERISE CLAIMS (...), THE PARISH COUNCILS TRIED TO SUBDIVIDE THESE CLAIMS AMONG THEMSELVES SO THAT THEY COULD CARRY OUT INTERVIEWS AND GIVE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT AND THIS WAS FROWNED UPON AS WELL (...) IF ON THE ONE HAND THIS WAS ACCEPTED, ON THE OTHER THE COUNCILS CONTINUE TO COMPLAIN THAT THEY ARE NOT PARTICIPATING MORE ACTIVELY"; "COORDINATION IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY, AND THINGS GET 'JAMMED' IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY, THINGS DON'T WORK THERE BUT THAT WAS WHERE THINGS SHOULD WORK".

The lack of a culture of partnership mentioned by an interviewee perhaps underlies a concept of partnership which essentially includes coordination of a more or less ad hoc nature between the services, without there necessarily being work around common objectives and a common definition of actions and strategies, the latter involving the pooling of resources and responsibilities: "THE GMI WAS USEFUL ONLY FOR FORMALISING THE PARTNERSHIPS BECAUSE I ALWAYS LIAISED WITH THE CRSS AND WITH THE COUNCIL AND THE SCHOOL". In addition to this, partnership for some means not creating problems for colleagues in the other service: "WE USED TO WORK IN COORDINATION. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THERE'S A MEETING AND ONE COLLEAGUE CAN GO AND THE OTHER CAN'T, THAT PERSONAL ISSUE DOESN'T ARISE: "AH! I REALLY CAN'T GO", WE REARRANGE THINGS A BIT AND THEN SET ANOTHER DAY".

The lack of (human and financial) resources that generally affects the non-profit-making associations and the fact that these are concentrated in the municipality in activity at the level of the parish or neighbourhood or a particular theme or group, means that the vision of the problems as a whole is lost and that each one "DEFENDS THEIR OWN INTERESTS". A non-systematic view of the problems prevents advantageous relationships being established between certain partners, and it remains to be seen who has a more restricted view of reality: "WHAT'S THE ADVANTAGE OF A PARTNER WHO WORKS WITH THE GYPSIES? HOW CAN HE UNDERSTAND THE REST? I THINK HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND BECAUSE HE HAS A VERY RESTRICTED VIEW OF THE PROBLEMS".

In any event the functioning in the executive board and the LSC allowed reflection to take place on the real situation and allowed services that had been involved in this area less frequently to have a clear view of the social problems of the municipality. It meant that issues were debated and that different organisations were aware of the difficulties and problems of other bodies. Since partnership and coordination between services is a process under permanent construction, it is hoped that progress can be made from a stage of reflection and debate to a stage of implementation, which is precisely where all the operational shortcomings of this LSC have been felt: "THE FUNCTIONING OF THE LSC IS VERY COMPLEX. THERE ARE DIFFICULTIES, THERE IS BUREAUCRACY, THERE IS NO LOGISTIC SUPPORT, WE DON'T HAVE COMPUTERISATION. ALTHOUGH ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS COME OUT AND SOLUTIONS ARE PRESENTED, AFTERWARDS WE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT PROGRESS IS NOT BEING MADE.

WE HAVE THE SAME LIMITATIONS, THE SAME LACK OF RESOURCES (...) WHEN WE COME OUT WE THINK THAT THINGS WILL GET BETTER BUT THEY STAY THE SAME. ALL THE PARTNERS KNOW EACH OTHER BUT AFTERWARDS THERE ARE THINGS THEY DON'T MANAGE TO CARRY OUT”.

3.4. The outputs of coordination

There are partners who are not satisfied with the information circuit between the LSC and the executive board, “NOT ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD GO TO THE LSC AND INFORMATION IS NOT ALWAYS PASSED ON”, they say, which means that even the number of minimum income claims is not known in some parishes.

As far as making resources available between partners is concerned, this is restricted in many cases to making spaces available, which allows social services staff to begin to deal with the public more closely. Lack of available human resources, as stated previously, is one of the problems of the Amadora LSC. With the exception of the CRSS and Amadora Municipal Council most of the partners, though with different levels of participation, do not have staff involved in dealing with and supporting beneficiaries. One of the Parish Councils in the municipality (Damaia) began to implement the GMI in Amadora, but at the moment its participation is more restricted, and like the other partners its availability involves above all attending meetings of the executive board or the LSC. The feeling therefore remains that some partners are interested in channelling resources towards the measure, which to some extent is negated not so much by their absence and by the difficulty in getting them but by a (subjective) assessment of this availability by the coordinator of the LSC: “THERE ARE PARTNERS WHO DON'T MIND MAKING MORE HUMAN RESOURCES AVAILABLE, EXCEPT THAT THEY THEMSELVES DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES EITHER. FOR EXAMPLE, HOW MUCH TIME CAN A COUNCIL STAFF MEMBER MAKE AVAILABLE TO THE GMI IF THEY ALSO HAVE THE COUNCIL'S ACTION PLANS AND THE COUNCIL CONSIDERS ITS ACTION PLANS TO BE PRIORITY?”

According to some people the variety of problems affecting the municipality (and as such the interests of the partners on the LSC) is a factor that hinders the definition of joint objectives between partners. While it is true that these objectives are sometimes defined, they are certainly far from being achieved due to the lack of (human and other) resources to carry them out. Lack of definition at the level of objectives will have an impact on defining priorities, while the difficulties of realisation and lack of priority attributed to the measure are also reflected in a certain discipline of the LSC's work: “PRIORITIES ARE DEFINED BUT AFTERWARDS THINGS GO PEAR SHAPED (...) COMPUTERISATION OF CLAIMS, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS ALREADY BEEN GIVEN PRIORITY AT TIMES...”; “WHEN THERE'S A LSC MEETING PRIORITIES ARE DECIDED, BUT THIS DOESN'T MEAN THAT EACH PARTNER THEMSELVES GIVES PRIORITY TO WHAT WAS DECIDED IN THEIR OWN SERVICE. PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE OF DEFINING PRIORITIES JOINTLY BUT AFTERWARDS ALL THE WORK FALLS ON THE CRSS”.

New actions have nevertheless appeared in connection with various programmes – the Anti-Poverty Programme; Measure 2 of the Integar Subprogramme, School-Workshops, Continuing education – which function as resources for the integration programmes of GMI beneficiaries. According to some interviewees there are partners who “HAVE VERY DYNAMIC STRUCTURES AND WHO HAVE CARRIED OUT EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TRAINING PROJECTS TO COVER PEOPLE ON THE GMI”. There is therefore great willingness to implement projects and acceptance of the idea that a solution for the integration programmes will be “NOT TO ACT INDIVIDUALLY BUT IN GROUPS THAT HAVE THE SAME PROBLEMS”, from the point of view of taking full advantage of resources. Even when actions or programmes arise from needs

identified by the executive board or by the LSC, however, the question remains of whether the actions actually cover GMI beneficiaries. Meanwhile it is known that some non-partner agencies have nevertheless gone to the LSC to get information on implementing the actions they are responsible for that could cover GMI beneficiaries, and this information has not always been properly used to the benefit of the integration programmes.

The implementation of actions designed to meet the needs of GMI beneficiaries and to help resolve their problems, and to some extent the effectiveness of some of these actions, comes up against another type of problem:

- The working methods underlying some of the programmes are not always the most appropriate, since they do not take the specific features of the target public into account: “WE HAVE A ROMANY POPULATION HERE WITH LOW LEVELS OF EDUCATION WHICH IS BEING SUBJECTED TO ACTIVE MEASURES OF INTEGRATION INTO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, BUT IT WAS PROBABLY NOT IN THE CONTINUING EDUCATION THAT IS BEING GIVEN TO BENEFICIARIES (...) IT’S DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO BE IN A CLASSROOM FOR TWO HOURS”.
- Some measures lack flexibility, particularly as regards the training programmes implemented by the Job Centre – in terms of the number of trainees to begin courses, the number of training hours, and the criteria for selecting trainees, for example. Meanwhile some of the training actions implemented by private institutions covered by programmes launched by the IEFP respond firstly to the funding needs of these institutions (obliged to seek funds constantly). The subjects of training and the target public are often defined above all on the basis of criteria of eligibility. Hence it is said: “THE TRAINING WE HAVE DOES NOT ALWAYS CORRESPOND TO THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING UNDERWAY. THE INSTITUTIONS ADMINISTER TRAINING ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN NEEDS RATHER THAN ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE USER. WE HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY GETTING OUR USER INTO SUCH TRAINING”.
- There were no responses for one of the most serious problems facing a large part of GMI beneficiaries: housing.

The inequality of resources between the different areas that normally overlap in beneficiaries’ integration programmes and the previously mentioned lack of preparation of (some) staff for making a diagnosis and definition of an integration programme often leads to the system of “*HEADING 5: YOUNG CHILDREN FOR SCHOOL; IF THE FATHER IS UNEMPLOYED HE LOOKS FOR WORK; IF THE MOTHER IS SICK SHE TAKES THE MEDICINE...*”, or in other words, a programme that should be *made to measure* ultimately becomes just another *ready to wear* programme, without considering that the objectives and actions should reflect the initial situation of the family and the individuals. What happens therefore is that the individual who is not working is sent to the Job Centre, as would be the case in any other circumstances for a person in the same situation, “EVEN THOUGH THIS INDIVIDUAL MAY NOT HAVE ANY VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS, EVEN IF THEY HAVE CHILDREN AND HAVE NOWHERE TO LEAVE THEM, EVEN IF THEY HAVE HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT AREN’T BEING TREATED”. Once again the lack of resources and the accompanying time factor are cited: “THE STAFF THEMSELVES DON’T HAVE TIME TO ASSESS WHAT THE BEST INTEGRATION PROGRAMME IS FOR THE FAMILY”.

3.5. The impact of coordination

In April 2000 the Amadora LSC had 2 038 accepted claims for the minimum income, corresponding to 7 055 beneficiaries. Out of these claims only 308 integration contracts had

been signed and these are not monitored regularly. It is therefore not possible to assess how far they are accomplished. The lack of time available to carry out the work well, and on the other hand the type of coordination and responsibilities between staff of the different partner organisations, means that families' integration programmes are not fulfilled, and this is not recorded and put right with the beneficiaries themselves: "IF THERE IS NON-COMPLIANCE BY SOMEONE INVOLVED IN AN ACTION IN THE AREA OF EDUCATION, THEN EDUCATION INFORMS THE STAFF MEMBER, BUT SINCE THE STAFF MEMBER DOES NOT HAVE TIME TO DEAL WITH THE BENEFICIARY AND SUPPORT THE FAMILY, THERE IS A BREAKDOWN. AT THE LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT THERE HAS BEEN NO FEED-BACK ON THE SITUATIONS THAT ARE FORWARDED TO THE JOB CENTRE".

The period of time between the award (or granting) of the benefit and signature of the integration contract is very long: "SOME PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING THE BENEFIT SINCE 1997 WITHOUT HAVING AN INTEGRATION PROGRAMME OR CONTRACT (...) WHAT IS BEING REDUCED AT THE MOMENT IS THE TIME GAP BETWEEN RECEIVING THE CLAIM AND AWARDED THE BENEFIT". This situation is extremely detrimental to the image of the measure and to the responsibility and participation expected of beneficiaries, who strategically take advantage of the loopholes in the system: "WHEN WE GO TO DO THE INTEGRATION PLAN THE BENEFICIARIES HAVE EITHER FORGOTTEN OR DON'T KNOW THAT THEY HAD TO MAKE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE GMI"; "PEOPLE DON'T BELIEVE IN THE MEASURE. A FIRST MEETING IS HELD AND THEY'RE TOLD THAT THEY HAVE TO COMPLY WITH AN INTEGRATION PROGRAMME, THEN IF THEY'RE LEFT WAITING FOR A YEAR OR MORE THEY AREN'T GOING TO BELIEVE IN IT AND THE SYSTEM COLLAPSES. WE KNOW OF CASES WHERE THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES TELL OTHERS NOT TO TAKE PART BECAUSE NO INTEGRATION PLANS AT ALL ARE GOING TO BE DRAWN UP".

The time elapsing in contacting the families to carry out an integration programme therefore negates an active participation methodology. If there is difficulty on the part of beneficiaries in understanding this new form of working, however – particularly among those who have depended on social action for many years – the staff on the other hand will adopt a position and a way of acting which does not favour participation and autonomy. At this level the opinions of the partners are divided, some placing the emphasis on the beneficiary, others stressing how the whole process tends to remove responsibility. How can beneficiaries know, in fact, that they have obligations to fulfil when the first benefit that appears to them as a right involves a corresponding duty to which they were not accustomed, a duty which is not always properly explained to them, the user not having a clear idea of what his true commitments are, even on signing the contract:

- "PEOPLE COME UP WITH EXCUSES, THEY COME UP WITH A WAY OF TAKING AS MUCH ADVANTAGE AS POSSIBLE, AND MANY OF THEM THINK THEY ARE RECEIVING THE GMI AND THAT WE'RE OBLIGED TO GIVE THEM THE MONEY AND IT DOESN'T EVEN ENTER THEIR HEADS THAT THERE'S A CONTRACT THEY HAVE TO FULFIL, AND THAT THERE ARE RULES THEY HAVE TO OBEY";
- "PEOPLE GET USED TO THE IDEA THAT WE HAVE TO DO IT FOR THEM";
- "THE CONTRACT SHOULD MAKE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THAT THEY HAVE A COMMITMENT, IT'S NOT JUST A MATTER OF SIGNING (...) THE PROBLEM NOW IS THAT THEY SIGN AND THEN THEY'RE NOT ASKED FOR ANYTHING (...) WE PORTUGUESE HAVE A CULTURE THAT REMOVES RESPONSIBILITY, SO RULES AND LAWS ARE THERE SO THAT PEOPLE KNOW THAT THEY EXIST AND SO THAT THEY CAN BE BYPASSED, AND IF THEY CAN DO IT ANOTHER WAY THEY WILL DO";

- “SOMETIMES THE OVERRIDING IDEA IS THAT THE STAFF DO WHAT THEY THINK IS GOOD FOR THAT FAMILY RATHER THAN NEGOTIATING (...). SOME BENEFICIARIES SIGN THE INTEGRATION PLANS BECAUSE THEY KNOW IT’S AN OPPORTUNITY TO RECEIVE THE CASH BENEFIT AND THEY SIGN WITHOUT EVEN THINKING ABOUT WHAT IT INVOLVES, SO THAT WHEN PEOPLE DON’T COMPLY AND THEY’RE CALLED IN AND THEY UNDERSTAND THAT IF THEY DON’T COMPLY THE BENEFIT IS CUT... IT’S BEEN COMPLICATED TO MANAGE THIS SITUATION WITH SOME FAMILIES”.

Slowness in preparing and implementing families’ integration programmes reflects how responses are not as quick as they should be. The volume of situations compared to the lack of personnel contributes to situations “dragging on” without integration programmes, but on the other hand some procedures continue to be the same and the circuit the beneficiaries pass through in the different services has not changed, though the situation may be studied and duly diagnosed.

Despite everything there are parishes²⁹ with good coverage in terms of integration contracts, such as Damaia. Although this is one of the most difficult parishes in Amadora, with a multi-ethnic population (Africans, Luso-Africans, Portuguese, Romanies) and many rundown districts, it has around 100 integration programmes with the respective contract signed, which corresponds to close to a third of those in the municipality as a whole. The fact that this was where the GMI pilot project was run, the fact that the Parish Council personnel includes a social services staff member and certainly the dynamism of those who ensure GMI work for the CRSS have all contributed towards good coverage.

The following are some of the successful cases.

Ana: “*THE GUARANTEED MINIMUM INCOME HAS ARRIVED... GREAT!*”

Ana is 42 years old and lives with her five-year-old daughter. Since she is disabled she lives on a Social Security disability pension. Her husband is a drug addict and “SOMETIMES HE WORKS, SOMETIMES HE DOESN’T”. The financial difficulties get worse when her husband goes into an association for treating drug addicts and support from her husband’s family goes to him. Her own father died, leaving her “WITH NO ONE TO TURN TO”. She had already claimed welfare; the first time was in 1984 after she was physically abused by her husband, and this was also when she was directed to the disability pension. She heard about the GMI in early 1999. When she applied for the benefit she was living on her disability pension of 21 000 escudos (around 105 euro). Financial difficulties were felt above all in food: “WE ATE SPAGHETTI WITH KETCHUP OR BUTTER AND A BIT OF CHEESE. I COULD ONLY MANAGE TO BUY A BIT OF MEAT OR FISH FOR MY DAUGHTER”, and debts were building up.

Access to the GMI was processed easily: “MY CASE-WORKER EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO ME. AT THE COUNTER IT WAS A BIT MORE CONFUSING BECAUSE THEY WANTED THIS PAPER AND THEN THAT PAPER... BUT IF YOU’RE ASKING FOR SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO COOPERATE AND I GOT STUCK IN”. The first instalment was paid eight months later, with a monthly value of 10 500 escudos (52 euro): “THE GMI CAME AND IT WAS GREAT, I BEGAN TO PAY OFF MY DEBTS AND FROM TIME TO TIME I COULD BUY SOMETHING FOR MY DAUGHTER”.

She thinks the integration programme helps her to integrate: “I THINK VOCATIONAL TRAINING IS ESSENTIAL FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION. BECAUSE AT THE END OF THE DAY WHAT IS INTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY? IT’S HAVING YOUR LIFE, YOUR HOUSE, YOUR CAR, YOUR FAMILY, YOUR INDEPENDENCE, YOUR PERSONAL SATISFACTION, AND FOR ALL THIS YOU HAVE TO HAVE

²⁹ It should be noted that CRSS staff are divided by parishes; some of them combine two or three parishes.

AN OCCUPATION”; as for her programme in particular, “IT WAS AGREED THAT I WOULD DO A COURSE (...) AND THEN MY IDEA IS TO WORK AT HOME FOR MYSELF”. So from the beginning of this year she has been attending a course in manual binding at Amadora Vocational School, “IT WAS ME WHO CHOSE IT”. The problem was her daughter’s school, but “WE MANAGED TO FIND A SCHOOL THROUGH THE *INSTITUTO DE APOIO À CRIANÇA* [CHILD WELFARE INSTITUTE]”,³⁰.

Ana’s satisfaction is evident: “I’M LEARNING WELL AND I REALLY ENJOY MY COURSE. I’M ALREADY MAKING MY OWN THINGS AT HOME”. Because she participates in this training her benefit was replaced by the respective grant and the trade-off is getting even better: “BEFORE I GOT 11 880 ESCUDOS AND I WAS STUCK AT HOME, NOW I GET 63 800 ESCUDOS PLUS 625 ESCUDOS FOR FOOD AND I’M BUSY. BEFORE I JUST USED TO GO OUT TO TAKE MY DAUGHTER TO SCHOOL AND BRING HER BACK. I WAS GOING ROUND THE BEND NOT KNOWING WHAT TO DO. THAT’S ALL CHANGED. I CAN’T EVEN IMAGINE MYSELF AT HOME AGAIN... I’D EVEN CLEAN THE SAME PART OF THE HOUSE THREE OR FOUR TIMES. IT WAS AWFUL. IT WASN’T LIVING, IT WAS VEGETATING. NOW I’M REALLY LIVING. (...). AND NOW I CAN TAKE MY DAUGHTER TO MCDONALDS, SHE’S REALLY HAPPY. BEFORE WE ONLY WENT VERY RARELY AND SHE HAD A *HAPPY MEAL* AND I DIDN’T EAT ANYTHING. NOT NOW! SHE HAS A *HAPPY MEAL* AND I HAVE ANOTHER ONE SO SHE GETS TWO DOLLS. AND FOR HER THAT’S VERY GOOD. NOW SHE CAN HAVE THE SAME AS OTHER KIDS”.

3.6. Preliminary conclusions

The Amadora LSC is a structure which is seriously restricted by the size and complexity of the problems of the municipality and simultaneously hinders progress in attenuating them, and the different bodies have a negative view of its functioning. The weak autonomy of the LSC and its subordination to the Subregional Social Security Office are just some of the factors that prevent timely action.

In this municipality the impact of coordination is therefore rather limited and all the adverse effects of a measure such as the GMI are evident, starting with the dependence of beneficiaries on the benefit and the absence of the notion of establishing contracts.

There are successful cases, however, where the GMI allows an integrated approach for those who did not have other possible answers.

³⁰ The *Instituto de Apoio à Criança* is part of the LSC. When Ana says “school” she means a pre-primary school, and there are serious shortcomings in this type of facility in the municipality of Amadora.

4. Case study 4: Ferreira do Alentejo

4.1. General presentation

In Ferreira do Alentejo the LSC is coordinated by the Municipal Council - it should be remembered that according to the law the coordination of the LSC is the responsibility of a representative of the Social Security, unless its members unanimously appoint another coordinator.

Besides the local authority there are five representatives of the Parish Councils, the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* of Ferreira, the *União de Sindicatos de Beja* [Beja Trade Union Federation] – *Confederação Geral de Trabalhadores Portugueses*, the *União Geral de Trabalhadores* and a cooperative of users and services – *ESDIME: Empresa de Messejana para o Desenvolvimento Integrado* [Messejana Integrated Development Corporation]. As usual the LSC is also formed by the obligatory partners of the GMI, making a total of 14 bodies.

The LSC functions on a monthly basis and irregular attendance by partners has been cited as a problem. The board meets once per week and is attended by ESDIME, the Municipal Council and the obligatory partners.

Although participation in the initial process was very good, the lack of motivation of partners and their failure to attend meetings led to new strategies, such as the decentralisation of the LSC at parish level. This has not yet been implemented, however, but the will to do so seems to exist: “WE’VE TRIED IN VARIOUS WAYS AND WE’LL CONTINUE TO TRY”.

There are few partners who see the GMI as a priority, although it is identified as a measure to combat poverty and unemployment and its coordination is not the direct responsibility of the Social Security.

The human resources allocated locally to implementing the measure vary according to the type of work to be carried out. The Beja Subregional Service of the Alentejo Regional Social Security Office has a case-worker to provide information and advice to beneficiaries, as does the Municipal Council. This provision by the Council made it possible to increase the number of days for providing information and advice, since the case-worker travels to Ferreira twice a week.

Besides the measures available in the different obligatory partners the actions are implemented not only with the resources of Ferreira Municipal Council but also ESDIME, which additionally plays an important role in supporting claims, including the provision of psychological support for beneficiaries who need it.

4.2. Contextualisation

Ferreira do Alentejo is a small municipality in the district of Beja. It is therefore situated in the Alentejo, a region to the south of the country where agriculture on very large holdings is devoted mainly to the production of cereals – during the *Estado Novo* [Salazar-Caetano dictatorship] the Alentejo was actually considered to be the breadbasket of Portugal.

This region is traditionally considered to be very poor. Eurostat data for 1995 show that 25.6% of the population in the Alentejo live in poverty, according to a poverty rate calculated on 60% of the average income.

For many decades the Alentejo, especially the municipalities in the district of Beja, experienced migratory movements, particularly to other regions of the country, such as Lisbon and Setúbal. These movements gave rise to a negative rate of growth and an index of ageing which reached 106.5 in the municipality of Ferreira in 1991.

Despite the growth enjoyed by the tertiary sector of the economy in the district, which was not preceded by growth in jobs in industry, farming still predominates in Ferreira do Alentejo, and even in the district of Beja it is the municipality where agriculture is most predominant. It also had one of the highest rates of activity in the district (41.2%).

Against this background, in which various difficulties have been felt in attracting investment, with a concomitant impact on unemployment, ESDIME appeared in the late 1980s as an organisation in the cooperative sector that promoted support for the economic initiatives of its members. Its objectives include regional development, support for business initiatives by means of technical consultancy, the promotion of technical-vocational training courses in areas such as the hotel trade, the conservation and restoration of buildings, agriculture and carpentry. ESDIME has favoured an approach to work in partnership at local or regional level as a process that favours accomplishment of the objectives approved.

4.3. The process of change

In the municipality of Ferreira do Alentejo there again appears to be a huge gulf between the LSC and the executive board. Previous knowledge between the partners (as people and institutions) and work in partnership in connection with the anti-poverty projects promoted by the local authority and the programmes developed by ESDIME made it possible to create a certain internal cohesion among members of the board. This executive “arm” of the LSC dominates the wider set of partners due to its dynamism and capacity to create new resources.

As has been said, work in partnership was not a novelty in the municipality but the creation of a structure such as the LSC, organised around a measure whose objectives and strategies are not always agreed upon, limits its capacity to mobilise new partners.

Perhaps for this reason the changes that have occurred in the institutions themselves have not been very significant. For those that were already involved in one way or another in a process of social transformation in the municipality, adaptation to the GMI involved nothing more than some staff reorganising their time so as to devote more time to dealing with the public applying for the GMI, and to greater decentralisation. For the others there is still a long way to go: “THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE AGENTS IN THE PROCESS NEEDS TIME; IT’S A GRADUAL PROCESS AND WE CAN’T EXPECT THE PARTNERS TO BE AVAILABLE ALL THE TIME. IN THIS MUNICIPALITY WE’RE ACTUALLY VERY LUCKY TO HAVE ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMMES WITH WORK IN PARTNERSHIP, AND THE BODIES WERE ALREADY USED TO THIS WAY OF FUNCTIONING (...) BUT INVOLVEMENT IN A JOINT PROJECT IS NEEDED AND THERE’S NOT YET A MATURE CULTURE IN THIS RESPECT”.

Some aspects of the measure and the partnerships do not favour joint work, however. On the one hand, similar to what occurs in other places, an idea continues that partnership has to bring palpable and quantifiable benefits: “THERE WAS THE EXAMPLE OF PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS FOR THE ANTI-POVERTY PROJECT IN WHICH PEOPLE CAME TO DISCUSS WHAT MONEY WOULD GO TO THIS PARISH AND TO THAT ONE, AND WHO WOULD BENEFIT MOST AND WOULD BE SEEN IN A BETTER LIGHT BY THE MUNICIPALITIES”. This position by some partners goes much further than merely gaining funds. Social action was in fact for a long time the responsibility

either of the Social Security or of the private organisations such as the IPSS. Bodies such as the local authorities, whether the Parish Councils or even the Municipal Councils, did not have responsibilities at this level until very recently. The social action that occurred in some Municipalities depended solely and exclusively on the social conscience of some of their members and on their knowledge of these areas. In relatively isolated rural areas where difficulties are still felt at the level of the most basic infrastructures, such as access routes and housing conditions, it is understandable for local action to be geared primarily towards filling these gaps, which not only makes the work carried out very visible but also “LEAVES A FINISHED JOB”. In this context few local authorities (Councils) have personnel with the technical skills for action in the social area: “HOW MANY PARISH COUNCILS IN THE COUNTRY HAVE AN AREA IN THEIR SOCIAL ACTION STRUCTURE AND HAVE CASE-WORKERS? OUR SKILLS IN THIS AREA WERE IF ANYTHING THOSE OF IDENTIFYING SITUATIONS AND DIRECTING THEM TOWARDS THE SOCIAL SECURITY. A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE OF WORK OPENED UP WITH THE GMI. AT THE MOMENT THE FACT OF BEING A PARTNER OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY HAS OPENED UP NEW SKILLS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF NEW RESPONSES FOR THE COUNCILS, BUT IN FACT THINGS ARE STILL RATHER LIMITED”.

In Ferreira do Alentejo part of the lack of motivation of LSC partners, particularly the local authorities, lies in the poor image the public has of the GMI. It is strongly associated with the Romany population, with whom there is clear difficulty in drawing up appropriate integration programmes. In many cases this difficulty is reflected in the non-existence of a programme or failure to comply with them by beneficiaries from this community. Added to this are the difficulties of confirming the income declared, bearing in mind that most of these people carry out self-employed work on the fringes of the tax and social security systems.

Some partners therefore do not wish to identify with the LSC itself because “IT’S NOT A VOTE-WINNER”, or there are some who even challenge the benefit as a right: “I DON’T THINK THE MEASURE SHOULD BE GENERALISED”.

4.4. The outputs of coordination

The exchange of information between members of the board is a reality, and GMI cases are discussed among them. The progress of integration programmes is discussed, and information transmitted by the *Comissão Nacional do Rendimento Mínimo* is also discussed by the board. The “most important” information is forwarded to the other partners in LSC meetings and, when members do not attend, the information is transmitted formally, using the normal means of communication for this purpose.

Human resources are made available in particular by means of the partners on the board: the Social Security and Municipal Council for information and advice and subsequent work; ESDIME as regards the involvement of some beneficiaries in programmes they are responsible for and the respective support. One of the Parish Councils (Odivelas) also has a case-worker allocated to the GMI on a part-time basis. Besides the human resources it should be noted that ESDIME and the type of activities it normally develops are an important resource made available to the LSC for the integration programmes.

A common definition of objectives is non-existent, however, at least in the broader context of the LSC. How can common work objectives exist if there is no generalised understanding of what everybody’s role on the Local Committee is? Meanwhile the nature and objectives of the integration programmes are not always conflict-free: “FOR SOME IT’S GOOD TO DO VOCATIONAL

TRAINING BUT FOR ME TRAINING IS JUST PART OF THE PROGRAMME, AFTERWARDS YOU HAVE TO INTEGRATE PEOPLE INTO THE LABOUR MARKET”.

From this point it is also difficult to identify priorities. They are accomplished, however, at the more limited level of the executive board.

4.5. The impact of coordination

In April 2000 the Ferreira do Alentejo LSC had 149 minimum income claims, the great majority of which included a signed contract.

The most frequent action areas in the contracts are housing and social action, the former because there are some shortcomings in housing conditions in the municipality: houses are rural in type, and the weak economic capacity of the population means that many of them do not provide modern comforts. On the other hand it is also in this area that the Council could make more resources available, whether financial or technical. Council architects and engineers are often made available to identify needs and to plan work, and to provide materials and involve the individuals and families in accomplishing the necessary refurbishment.

At the level of social action many of the activities classified in the integration programmes are connected with work to put people's employment situation in order. This is a region in which the underground economy is strong, where the GMI has played an important role in correcting some people's situations, leading to their registration with the Social Security. Meanwhile the benefit covers a significant number of long-term unemployed who are not used to working and who are “in despair”, with whom what could be termed “psychological rehabilitation work” must be carried out, which is also included in the area of social action.

Since the region is strongly characterised by seasonal work (some people only work two or three months in the year), the amount of benefits has to be constantly brought up to date and a large number of benefits are terminated because changes in income occur.

In this LSC the difficulty does not lie in its capacity to prepare the integration programmes – the relationship between the number of claims and the number of staff is much more favourable than in other municipalities – but in putting some programmes into practice. This difficulty is based on the type of population – the example has already been given of the Romany population, in relation to which most of the existing actions, programmes and activities are not adapted, added to which are problems arising from their itinerant life style. It is also based on difficulties of integrating into the labour market, even after training, as one interviewee said. As one of the leaders of ESDIME asserts, “there is not a strong entrepreneurial tradition, which obviously effects people's understanding of what partnership might mean in this region” (Rodrigues, et al, 1998:), adding another dimension of difficulty in achieving the integration programmes, particularly those geared towards the working-age population.

The integration contract dimension has generated some reactions with beneficiaries themselves. Accustomed to discretionary social welfare, some of them do not understand the need for integration programmes and for signing contracts: “THEY ARE NOT MOTIVATED FOR THIS NEW WAY OF DOING THINGS AND THEY RESIST, MAINLY IN THE SENSE OF GIVING SOMETHING IN EXCHANGE”; but it is also true that people begin to feel that this is an automatic benefit in relation to which they cannot be eternally dependent: “THEY FEEL THAT IT ISN'T

CHARITY AND AFTERWARDS THEY SEE THAT THE AREAS OF EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING ARE WORKED ON AND THEY THEMSELVES START TO HAVE OTHER PERSPECTIVES”.

This awareness by the population is therefore greatly facilitated by the existence of a range of partners who work in coordination and who appear to the beneficiary as a unit.

Despite the difficulties affecting the Council most of the partners recognise that it has been easier to integrate GMI beneficiaries into the labour market: “THE JOB CENTRE STAFF MEMBER IS DIRECTLY INVOLVED, THEY KNOW THE SITUATIONS...”, although here too, as in other places and with other people, they are above all jobs of an irregular nature.

There has also been an increase as regards the development of programmes and actions within the framework of active training and employment policies: various vocational training programmes have been developed and applications have been submitted. As far as education is concerned, continuing education courses have been implemented. Perhaps the most innovative aspect, however, has been the creation of a network of crèches.

Clara: “If I don’t succeed I’ll apply for the GMI again”

Clara is 30 years old, she's married and lives with her husband and two children. Her husband works for a public body as a paver, while Clara was unemployed. She had already worked in one of the Parish Councils in the municipality under the *POC – Programa Ocupacional para Carenciados* [Occupational Programme for People in Need], but she terminated her contract and “AFTER THAT I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ELSE”. She went to the Job Centre to apply for unemployment benefit and they told her she was probably entitled to the GMI, given the income of the family: “MY HUSBAND’S WAGE WASN’T ENOUGH”.

Three months after submitting the application for the GMI she began to receive the benefit. Clara wanted to work, however: “I SAID THAT I WANTED TO WORK. I WANTED TO GET A JOB”. After analysing the situation they suggested she should “FINISH THE SIXTH YEAR AND LATER THIS COURSE CAME UP. MY HUSBAND WAS WORKING AND STILL IS, AND MY CHILDREN ARE AT SCHOOL”.

Some months later they offered her the opportunity to do a training course in decorating. Now she does not receive the benefit because she gets a training grant. As for the course, she says that “I’M LEARNING, I LIKE IT (...) AND IT WAS THANKS TO THE GMI THAT I MANAGED TO GET ON THIS COURSE AND FINISH THE SIXTH YEAR; I ONLY HAD THE FOURTH CLASS BEFORE”. In the future she very much hopes that a job opportunity will arise, failing which, “I’LL APPLY FOR THE GMI AGAIN”.

4.6. Preliminary conclusions

Except for the executive board there are few partners within the Ferreira de Alentejo LSC for whom the GMI is a priority, although it is identified as a measure to combat poverty and unemployment and the Social Security is not directly responsible for coordinating it.

A group of partners has nevertheless been mobilised with the objective of creating new responses, and there has been some impact in terms of improving the housing conditions of GMI beneficiaries. Meanwhile since this is a region where the underground economy is strong, the GMI has played an important role in correcting some situations.

There are some difficulties as regards implementing the actions geared directly towards integration into the labour market, given that there are few offers of work and that a strong entrepreneurial tradition is lacking.

In a context such as this the LSC must go beyond the limits of coordination at the level of the GMI and function as a promoter of local development projects, failing which a cycle of repeated applications for the GMI will be created.

5. Case study 5: Vila Real de Santo António

5.1. General presentation

In the municipality of Vila Real de Santo António the composition of the Guaranteed Minimum Income Local Support Committee is much more restricted than others in the country. It is composed of seven public and private bodies and includes representatives of local political power (Parish Councils and Municipal Councils), state bodies with local offices, and representatives of organisations of civil society.

The Vila Real de Santo António LSC is composed of: Vila Real de Santo António Municipal Council; three Parish Councils, which correspond to all the parishes in the municipality; the Vila Real *Misericórdia*; the *UGT – União Geral de Trabalhadores*; and an association called the *Movimento de Apoio ao Problema da Sida* [AIDS Support Movement].

The LSC is also composed of the four obligatory partners: Social Security – Algarve Regional Social Security Office (CRSS); Employment, by means of a representative of Vila Real Job Centre, an agency of the *Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional*; Health, by means of Vila Real Health Centre; and Education, through the person responsible for municipal coordination of Continuing education in Vila Real de Santo António..

The LSC is coordinated by a non-obligatory partner – the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* of Vila Real – whose participation in the process dates from the experimental stage of the GMI, and it was the *Misericórdia* that stimulated the pilot project and brought pressure to bear on the Council itself for the project to be applied in the municipality. The GMI forms part of a raft of active social policies which this institution has been developing, particularly an anti-poverty project. In view of the limited number of staff in the Algarve CRSS, when the GMI was launched “THE *MISERICÓRDIA* WAS FACED WITH THE CHALLENGE AND WE ACCEPTED IT BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THE MEASURE HAD TO BE VITALISED (...) THE INSTITUTIONS HAVE TO GROW AND SUPPORT THE MEASURES THE GOVERNMENT ADOPTS BECAUSE THEY’RE WORKING FOR THE PEOPLE, AND IF THEY DIDN’T SUPPORT THEM THEY WOULD NO LONGER BE WELFARE INSTITUTIONS”.

The LSC meets every two months in this municipality. The executive board, composed of the obligatory partners and the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, has weekly meetings.

The Vila Real LSC seems to function informally thanks to a relatively reduced number of people and a good relationship between its members. Priority is generally given to the measure and there is a common understanding that the GMI is “AN INSTRUMENT TO IMPROVE BENEFICIARIES’ LIVING CONDITIONS”, and there is a collective commitment that seeks to ensure the success of the measure in the municipality: “ALL THE INSTITUTIONS, WHETHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, DO THEIR UTMOST TO ENSURE RESULTS FOR THIS MEASURE. I THINK IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR MANY FAMILIES IN VILA REAL. OBVIOUSLY THIS

PROJECT CAN'T BE 100% SUCCESSFUL, IT'S A GRADUAL PROCESS BECAUSE THEY ARE FAMILIES THAT HAVEN'T BEEN PART OF LIFE IN SOCIETY FOR MANY YEARS, SO IT'S DIFFICULT TO DO THIS WORK. BUT ALL THE PARTNERS ARE VERY INTERESTED IN PROGRAMMING, SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING THIS ACTION HERE IN VILA REAL DE SANTO ANTÓNIO”.

The leadership is mobilised, which means that the partner institutions are also internally mobilised towards the objective of meeting expectations, particularly as regards the integration of beneficiaries, and for this reason some partners, such as the Municipal Council, state: “WE ARE ONE OF THE COUNCILS IN THE COUNTRY WITH THE MOST GMI BENEFICIARIES IN INTEGRATION PROCESSES; AT THE MOMENT WE HAVE 19 PEOPLE WORKING IN THE COUNCIL AND BEING SUPPORTED TO SEE WHETHER THEY WILL SUBSEQUENTLY INTEGRATE INTO SOCIETY”.

There is a unanimous opinion that all the partners have shown a great readiness to participate and “IT'S A FUNNY THING BECAUSE NO-ONE HAS TRIED TO DOMINATE. THERE'S BEEN A SPIRIT OF HUMILITY, OF IMPARTIALITY, WITHOUT SELF-CONGRATULATION, AND THINGS HAVE WORKED WELL”.

Some difficulties have arisen, however, in terms of the involvement and mobilisation of the Parish Councils. These include not only concerns expressed by the latter about the GMI, which above all are connected to controlling its application, i.e., to the award of the benefit to the detriment of the integration of beneficiaries, but also to the fact that the members of the executive body of the Councils combine their political posts with a normal professional activity. This reduces the time they are available for closer involvement, sometimes making their participation in LSC meetings impossible.

Although the law provides for the LSCs to have their own funding awarded by the respective CRSS, corresponding to 5% of the amount paid in GMI cash benefits, the Vila Real LSC claims that it has not been given such funding, so that there is no minimum structure allowing it to function.

The involvement of the partners in the measure, and possibly the fact that coordination of the LSC is in the hands of a member who does not belong to the CRSS, means that more technical resources are mobilised. Thus besides the representatives of each partner the Vila Real LSC has six personnel for receiving, preparing and supporting the integration programmes.

5.2. Contextualisation

The municipality of Vila Real de Santo António is located in the eastern Algarve in the far south of the country. Although it is a predominantly coastal municipality it is generally considered to be “peripheral” in the context of the Algarve, particularly in relation to the central and western coast, due to its weaker economic vitality.

The municipality is made up of three parishes: Vila Real de Santo António, Monte Gordo and Vila Nova de Cacela. Vila Nova de Cacela has different characteristics from the other two parishes in that it is essentially rural with a more ageing population, where everyone has a house and a little plot devoted to subsistence farming. The incidence of unemployment is not very significant and the number of families applying for the GMI is less than in the rest of the municipality. The parish does have some problems, however, particularly in terms of housing conditions, and also in terms of the existence of some very large families that suffer severe hardship.

Poor access has certainly helped to make the municipality relatively unattractive for significant new investment. Some people, meanwhile, particularly some interviewees, claim that the restrictions imposed because the municipality is covered by the Ria Formosa Natural Park, a protected environmental area, have made it difficult to create new jobs.

The lack of employment is seen as the principal problem affecting the municipality and helps to drive people elsewhere. Two of the municipality's main economic activities are in recession: in the fishing industry the restructuring of the fishing quota has led to a fall in the number of vessels and the number of shipyards and workshops, while trade, traditionally boosted by the presence of the Spanish, has suffered a loss of energy and capacity of attraction due to the opening of borders and greater opportunities for the movement of goods within the European Union.

In addition to phenomena of seasonality and job insecurity (which extend throughout the Algarve), the municipality of Vila Real de Santo António has been characterised by low wages and high rates of unemployment (even in the context of the Algarve region, though this difference has been falling in recent years): the rate of unemployment in the municipality currently varies between 8 and 12% (according to the period of the year), while it reached 18% two years ago. These employment problems are compounded by a generally poorly educated and not very skilled labour force.

The municipality, particularly the parishes of Monte Gordo and Vila Real de Santo António, therefore has significant pockets of poverty and even extreme situations of hunger in some areas. It has the highest percentage of families applying for the GMI in the Algarve, which reflects the economic and social hardship suffered here.

In this municipality, where the public social services have not played a significant role to date (due to shortages of human resources), the Vila Real de Santo António *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* has been a more active player, for some years developing projects in connection with active social measures rather than restricting itself to managing facilities.

5.3. The process of change

As a result of the anti-poverty project being run by the *Misericórdia* before the GMI was implemented, coordination with other institutions was already in place and fostered mutual awareness and good relations between representatives of the different institutions, constituting a type of learning experience. Joint work, however, did not exist: "THE INSTITUTIONS TENDED TO WORK FOR THEMSELVES. THERE WEREN'T MANY MEETINGS AND THEY WERE VERY OFTEN ONLY PARTIAL, BETWEEN THE *MISERICÓRDIA* AND THE COUNCIL, OR WITH A PARISH COUNCIL. THEY DIDN'T HAVE A COMMON OBJECTIVE LIKE THERE IS IN THE GMI AND THEY DIDN'T INVOLVE AS MANY PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS, AND IT'S IMPORTANT FOR THAT TO HAPPEN BECAUSE EVERYBODY KNOWS A BIT ABOUT THE PROBLEMS AND HAS A BETTER OVERALL VIEW".

As in other cases this is therefore an important change in which work in partnership began for some people and was consolidated for others, the different organisations being involved in a common objective - to promote the integration of GMI beneficiaries. Meanwhile the partnership is extending and is becoming multidimensional.

There is now also a concern to approach the problems presented by GMI beneficiaries not in isolation but as part of a local context in which employment issues are more important. As one interviewee said: "IT'S THE FIRST TIME THE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS HAVE ALL

SAT DOWN AT THE SAME TABLE TO DISCUSS LOCAL PROBLEMS, NOT ONLY GMI BENEFICIARIES BUT THE PROBLEMS OF THE REGION, SUCH AS EMPLOYMENT AND VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS, FOR EXAMPLE”. This therefore represents social action beginning to function from a local development perspective in which partnership plays a key role.

The implementation of the GMI has also brought about changes in the personnel of the institutions. For a long time the only staff working on the GMI were from the *Misericórdia*. Thanks to new contracts the CRSS currently has two more case-workers in the municipality. In the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, which coordinates the LSC, the work of the staff had to be reorganised so as to make them available for the GMI and to carry out more actions that can be used as a resource for the integration programmes.

The Municipal Council meanwhile set up a Welfare Office, which in addition to social workers involves a sociologist and a lawyer, and its objective is to support GMI families and to plan and develop projects for their social integration. The Welfare Office has a department that supports investment in the municipality and provides information and support for anyone who wishes to develop projects in the economic area, and it also promotes initiatives in connection with the social labour market.

Work at LSC level allows a more integrated approach to situations, which in itself is an important change in methodology: “NOW WHEN WE DISCUSS THE PROBLEMS OF A FAMILY ALL THE AREAS ARE PRESENT: HEALTH, EDUCATION, HOUSING...”. Previously in most cases the staff merely *gave* allowances or people were sent to different services without any coordination between staff. For example, while a person who asked for help in getting a job was previously sent straight to the Job Centre, now the social diagnosis of GMI beneficiaries includes work by the Job Centre careers guidance staff, which not only provides a more thorough knowledge of the situation but also immediately defines what should be done in the area of employment – whether integration into the labour market or involvement in vocational training. This type of procedure contradicts the traditional work of the services: “THE TRADITIONAL FORM OF WORKING IN SOCIAL ACTION HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE EXISTENCE OF INTEGRATION PROGRAMMES”.

5.4. The outputs of coordination

It is common practice to exchange information between partners, providing not only a common awareness of GMI procedures but also an awareness of the special skills of each partner, their activities and their possibilities of coordination with the GMI. “NOW WE ALL KNOW HOW THE SOCIAL SECURITY, THE HEALTH CENTRE AND EVEN THE COUNCIL OPERATE”, and this greater mutual awareness ultimately also favours greater transparency in the different services present on the LSC.

Some doubts exist, however, on the type of information that should circulate among LSC partners, leading some to argue that beneficiaries should be identified. For reasons of confidentiality their identity remains in the possession of the staff member who deals with the claim and the executive board.

A further output of this coordination is to make both material and human resources available for the measure to function better. This led to a more than threefold increase in human resources in the municipality. The fact that the LSC is coordinated outside the Social Security means that recruitment of more staff by the CRSS and the involvement of the Municipal Council has been helping to bring about a gradual balance between the number of benefits

awarded and the number of integration contracts: “AT FIRST THERE WAS AFLOOD OF CLAIMS AND THERE WERE NO STAFF TO CONTROL THE SITUATION. NOW WE MANAGE TO ENSURE A GREATER DIVISION OF CLAIMS, CHECKS ARE MADE, NOW WE MANAGE TO BRING INCOME UP-TO-DATE AND CANCEL BENEFITS; THINGS ARE STARTING TO GET MUCH MORE BALANCED”. According to some interviewees, however, there is still a need for more technical personnel.

Common objectives are defined above all among the partners present on the board, giving rise to a concerted effort to reduce claims without integration contracts. The definition of priorities on the basis of the objectives defined, however, is limited by the lack of resources allowing a local diagnosis to be made that goes beyond a view of the individual diagnoses of each GMI beneficiary. “SO THERE HAS BEEN NO COMMON DEFINITION OF PRIORITIES, OR IF THERE HAS IT HASN’T BEEN IN A TOTALLY CONSCIOUS WAY.”

New actions have been implemented, however. A training course was established in the area of the hotel trade aimed at kitchen hands, after identifying numerous offers of work in this professional area, and the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* is preparing a new anti-poverty project. The Municipal Council itself is developing a project within the *Vida – Emprego* Programme [Life – Employment], which covers 19 GMI beneficiaries. Following a needs analysis through the integration programmes the Council has also carried out refurbishing work to create better housing conditions, taking costs-benefits into account: “MANY OF THESE HOUSES ARE OWNER-OCCUPIED, BUT SINCE THEY ARE PEOPLE WHO LIVE ON A 30 000 ESCUDO PENSION THEY AREN’T IN A POSITION TO REFURBISH THEM THEMSELVES. SO THE COUNCIL ORGANISES PROGRAMMES TO REFURBISH HOUSES AND IT WORKS OUT VERY CHEAP FOR SOCIETY AND FOR THE LOCAL AUTHORITY ITSELF TO REPAIR THE ROOF OF A HOUSE OR PUT IN A BATHROOM, WHICH CAN COST FROM 300 000 TO A MILLION ESCUDOS, RATHER THAN BUILDING A NEW HOUSE FOR THEM.”

The channelling of GMI beneficiaries into education actions has led to more teachers being channelled into the region for continuing education and the organisation of more courses.

In this area too, however, the implementation of actions geared towards the GMI public is hampered in relative terms by how some bodies function. The example quoted relates specifically to education, and more specifically to the time lag between academic years and the need to have a constant number of actions for the integration programmes: “THE ACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, EVEN AT THE LEVEL OF CONTINUING EDUCATION, ARE GOVERNED BY THE SCHOOL YEAR WHILE THE LSC IS GOVERNED BY THE CALENDAR YEAR. TEACHERS ARE PLACED IN SEPTEMBER AND FINISH THEIR CONTRACTS IN AUGUST THE FOLLOWING YEAR, AND THIS COMPLICATES MATTERS WHEN A GROUP IS FORMED IN JANUARY TO MAKE A CLASS”. Local leaders want to increase flexibility so as to adjust procedures to the different situations, however.

Following the measures taken and the commitment of the partners, new resources have been created that may serve not only a public benefiting from the minimum income but all people in need. This involves the Welfare Office and the Investment Support Department within the Municipal Council, and a halfway house for HIV-positive and AIDS victims with domiciliary support, created by Vila Real de Santo António *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*.

Although assessment is carried out due to the need to produce reports in line with IDS policy, there is an awareness that more must be done in this area, not only to improve the effectiveness of the measure but also as a means of promoting the increasing involvement of partners: “EVERYBODY MUST KNOW WHAT ANSWERS HAVE BEEN GIVEN AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS. THE IEFP ITSELF HAS DIFFICULTY IN RESPONDING, AND IT’S HAD ITS COMPUTER SYSTEM INSTALLED FOR MANY YEARS”. Thus once again the absence of

computerised procedures for the social action services has prevented a more global approach to claims, going beyond a “case-by-case” analysis, allowing consistent assessment of the work carried out.

5.5. The impact of coordination

In April this year the Vila Real de Santo António LSC had 585 accepted claims for the GMI, corresponding to 1 901 individuals. Integration contracts have been signed in over 90% of claims, but the partners nevertheless have a negative view of the six-week hiatus between the award of the benefit and signature of the integration contracts. There is a feeling that “THE CASH BENEFIT SHOULD BE PAID AFTER AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF THE SITUATION AND NOT BEFORE”, based on the observation that “WHEN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING THE BENEFIT FOR A LONG TIME AND THEY GO TO CARRY OUT THE INTEGRATION PROGRAMME, THEY REFUSE TO SIGN BECAUSE THEY’RE ACCUSTOMED TO JUST RECEIVING THE BENEFIT”. Another way of precluding the situation is to have people qualified to explain the conditions of the measure properly when the claim is submitted.

The integration programmes underway in Vila Real are located in three major areas in particular: health, employment and education.

In the area of health they have operated partly to unravel situations of incapacity for work. Action in this field has also been geared towards unravelling some diseases and directing users to specialist consultations - it should be noted that access to specialist consultations is not at all easy in this region. This type of consultation does not exist even in Vila Real, and patients are referred to Faro. This in itself is inhibiting for people who are not used to such systems and who are unfamiliar with the administrative circuits and have some difficulty in relating to a particular type of service. Meanwhile some GMI beneficiaries in this region have aged prematurely and have some health problems (which nevertheless do not entitle them to a disability pension), while their age – they are in their 50s – prevents them either from getting into the labour market or from receiving an old-age pension. By means of its supplementary support the GMI has allowed these people to purchase false limbs or to undergo operations.

Bearing this population in mind, however, the fact that the GMI is actually working as far as awarding the cash benefit is concerned, filling gaps that had existed hitherto at the level of the social protection system, is more important than support in terms of health.

Actions concerning education are intended to make up for gaps in the population’s levels of schooling. Courses therefore exist in the first, second and third cycle in continuing education, leading to an increase in the number of courses operating and taking the number of teachers working in continuing education to 60. People of Romany extraction have been integrated into literacy courses, though this has not been problem-free. In many cases it involves action which is not very well adapted to the realities of this group. Some partners, however, have said that it has been interesting to get them to discuss particular themes of great importance for the social integration of the Romany community in continuing education courses: “LISTENING TO PEOPLE IN THE ROMANY COMMUNITY DISCUSSING PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE ROLE OF WOMEN IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. TWO YEARS AGO THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN INCONCEIVABLE”.

There is a belief that the ultimate objective of the integration programmes is to integrate beneficiaries into the labour market. Although it is not possible to specify how many beneficiaries have now been integrated into this market due to the already mentioned lack of

computerisation, the Job Centres believe that 20% of those who no longer receive the benefit have been integrated by means of various mechanisms available to the Job Centre: the Socio-professional Training Programme and the Training for Work Programme, among others already mentioned. The notion prevails, however, that this is a route that is beginning but “THE GMI PUBLIC IS THE TOP PRIORITY AND IN THIS POLICY MEASURE WE ARE ALREADY GIVING PRIORITY TO THIS PUBLIC”.

Yet integrating this population is not always easy. On the one hand they are people who to some extent are accustomed to poverty, they have low academic and vocational qualifications and they do not have a life style that allows them to adapt easily to work routines: “THEY LIVE IN PARTICULAR NEIGHBOURHOODS THAT BEAR THE STIGMA OF EXCLUSION, AND THIS IS AN OBSTACLE IN TERMS OF EMPLOYABILITY”. On the other hand this is an area of seasonal employment that makes professional integration very difficult for much of the year.

The debate of the partners on the employment difficulties in this region is in addition an example of how insecurity at work is increasingly a factor that affects these groups in particular, being more comprehensive and more persistent for them: “WORK HERE IN THE ALGARVE IS ALWAYS INSECURE; THERE ARE CONTRACTS OF SIX OR THREE MONTHS TO WORK DURING THE SUMMER AND REST DURING THE WINTER. TOURISM’S LIKE THAT! EMPLOYMENT IS INCREASINGLY INSECURE AND THE TRADE UNIONIS HAVE PROTESTED ABOUT IT, BUT INSECURITY IS A SIGN OF THE TIMES, WHERE COMPANIES HAVE A PARTICULAR TYPE OF FUNCTION AND THE STATE IS NO LONGER WHAT IT USED TO BE. YOU CAN’T GET A JOB FOR LIFE ANY MORE, THAT’S DETERMINED BY MARKET FORCES, THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR LABOUR, AND INSECURITY CAN EVEN BE SEEN IN POSITIVE TERMS, I.E., GOOD PROFESSIONALS ARE SOUGHT AFTER EVEN MORE NOWADAYS. NO WORKER WOULD BE WORRIED ABOUT BEING IN A JOB FOR THREE MONTHS IF THEY COULD THEN JOIN A COMPANY AND EARN TWICE WHAT THEY DID BEFORE. OBVIOUSLY THE LESS QUALIFIED HAVE THE LEAST SUSTAINABLE JOB (...). THE MORE QUALIFIED IT IS, THE MORE SUSTAINABLE THE JOB WILL BE. IN THE ABSTRACT THE GMI PUBLIC WILL PROBABLY NOT MANAGE TO OBTAIN A SUSTAINED JOB, BUT THE OBJECTIVE OF THE MEASURE IS TO GIVE THEM QUALIFICATIONS AND, IF THEY HAVE QUALIFICATIONS, CLEARLY THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE JOB WILL BE MUCH GREATER.”

Rather than seasonal or insecure employment, however, the municipality of Vila Real de Santo António, more than any other in the Algarve, suffers from a high rate of unemployment that bears witness to substantial gaps in terms of creating jobs. These problems have been discussed in the Regional Network for Qualifications and Employment, which covers the whole region of the Guadiana in the Algarve with the Municipalities of Castro Marim, Alcoutim, Tavira and Vila Real de Santo António. It involves over 100 partners, more than on the LSC itself, and seeks to find solutions for the need to create jobs, “BECAUSE IF NOT WE’LL CONTINUE TO ADMINISTER TRAINING AND PEOPLE WON’T SEE THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL IN TERMS OF GETTING A JOB”. Against this background there is an increasing perception that solutions must be found at the level of the local economy within an extended system of partnership.

But what do the GMI beneficiaries in the municipality say?

Manuel and Maria José: “I reckon I no longer need the GMI”

Manuel and Maria José are 32 and 27 years old respectively, and live with their two young children. They found out about the minimum wage in the Parish Council and then “GETTING ALL THE COMPULSORY DOCUMENTS TOGETHER” was neither difficult nor time-consuming. When they submitted the claim for the right to the benefit she was unemployed – “I STOPPED

WORKING WHEN MY ELDEST SON WAS BORN, I WAS 20 (...) BUT I'D ALWAYS WORKED, I STARTED WORKING WHEN I WAS TEN YEARS OLD" - and they lived on the wages of Manuel alone, who works as a photographer: "PHOTOGRAPHY USED TO BRING IN SOME MONEY BUT IT DOESN'T ANY MORE. I WASN'T EVEN EARNING THE MINIMUM WAGE, I ONLY BROUGHT IN 48 000 ESCUDOS". There were many difficulties, reflected in their indebtedness: "NORMALLY I'D ASK SHOPS TO GIVE ME CREDIT UNTIL THE END OF THE MONTH BUT AT THE END OF THE MONTH I SOMETIMES COULDN'T PAY. I WAS VERY UNHAPPY ABOUT THAT". There was also hardship in terms of housing – their house was old and did not provide minimum conditions of comfort. Almost two months after "PUTTING THE PAPERS IN" they called her and "IT WAS ALL VERY QUICK. AT THE MEETING THEY ASKED ME WHAT I WANTED AND I SAID THAT I WANTED A JOB". Manuel and Maria José show a good knowledge of "their" integration programme: "FOR ME THE MAIN THING WAS GETTING A JOB, BUT TO DO THAT THEY TOLD ME IT WOULD BE BETTER TO DO A COURSE, AND FOR MY HUSBAND TO DO ONE AS WELL. MY YOUNGEST SON WENT TO A NURSERY AND THE OLDER ONE CONTINUED AT SCHOOL." Maria José is currently attending a course for kitchen hands and continuing education (under socio-professional training), by means of which she will conclude the sixth year of schooling and "IF THERE WERE COURSES WITH MORE BASIC LEARNING, UP TO THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH YEAR, I'D BE QUITE HAPPY TO ATTEND"; in the meantime her husband has joined the António Aleixo Cultural Centre. This couple also received support in housing from the Municipal Council, and they are now living in a council neighbourhood and say: "NOW I'VE GOT FEWER PROBLEMS THAN I USED TO HAVE. AND I'VE GOT A HOUSE, I'VE GOT FURNITURE..." They hope that when Maria José finishes her course she will find a job and will no longer need the GMI.

Judite: "The GMI was a new lease of life"

Judite is 41 years old and lives with her husband and two daughters. She had an illness for almost two years that left her paralysed and bedridden; afterwards she became depressive. Her husband, a drug addict, was unemployed. Judite did not have the money for medicine, until they told her that "THE CASE-WORKERS COULD HELP, AND REALLY... (...) IT'S GREAT THAT PEOPLE LIKE THAT EXIST, TO HELP OTHERS, TO GUIDE PEOPLE, FOR ME THIS HELP WAS A NEW LEASE OF LIFE". Judite thinks the whole process was very quick – "I PUT IN THE PAPERS" and they called her immediately afterwards. The first impact "WAS VERY GOOD, BECAUSE THEY LISTENED, GAVE ADVICE AND HELPED (...) AND THEY ARE PEOPLE WHO EXPLAIN THINGS". At the time of preparing the integration programme Judite said that she would like to work with the elderly and "THEY PUT THAT IN THE PROGRAMME, WHICH WAS VERY GOOD". For her and for her 20 year-old eldest daughter the actions therefore focused on integration into the labour market, and she was responsible for registering with the Job Centre; for her husband it involved following a detoxification programme, while for her youngest daughter, ten years of age, it meant continuing at school. Medical care was also established for Judite, in view of her background. After signing the agreement it was not long before she was asked to join the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* Day Centre. "IF IT WASN'T FOR THE GMI I WOULDN'T HAVE MANAGED TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE AND GET INTO THE LABOUR MARKET, AND I HAD SO MANY PROBLEMS, SOMETIMES I EVEN WENT HUNGRY (...) I NEVER THOUGHT I'D HAVE SO MANY PEOPLE HELPING TO SOLVE MY PROBLEMS."

5.6. Preliminary conclusions

Experience of the minimum income in Vila Real de Santo António gave rise to the establishment of an informal and dynamic LSC. Coordinated by a non-obligatory partner for which the GMI is part of a continuing range of active social policies that it has been developing, the LSC is united around a common project, the GMI, which most partners give priority to.

As a priority measure accepted jointly by the partners, the GMI has led to the creation in some institutions of new structures geared towards social work covering GMI beneficiaries and others, thus fostering multiplier effects. The LSC has allowed a more than threefold increase in the number of technical staff allocated to the GMI, though the Social Security itself plays an important role at this level.

The activity of the Vila Real de Santo António LSC has allowed claims to be well controlled and major difficulties have not been identified between the number of recipients of the benefit and the number of contracts signed. Meanwhile the work carried out has allowed the beneficiaries to participate in preparing their integration programme, which has been designed to meet their expectations. The measure is therefore perceived as positive, giving rise to actions that cover the various dimensions of the problems that affect individuals.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

1. Levels and actors

In Portugal the management of the GMI is shared between public and private actors, involving different levels of national, regional and local activity and providing horizontal coordination between various agencies and different social policies, and vertical coordination within some of the organisations involved.

At national level the *Comissão Nacional do Rendimento Mínimo* plays a leading role, with the participation of representatives of various ministries and civil organisations. This Commission assesses the application of legislation concerning the GMI and the effectiveness of the measure, and stimulates the bodies responsible for its application. It also prepares proposals for amending the legal framework with a view to adapting the different measures and policies to the real social situation.

Linking the local to the national, the areas of employment (through the *Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional*) and social security and social action (through the Regional Social Security Offices) created internal teams to coordinate and pass information on, simultaneously promoting coordination between sections of the same ministry that previously operated separately. These structures (the CNRM and internal Ministry of Labour and Welfare teams) came up against an obstacle, however, in the hierarchical relationships that persist between the different layers of the decision-making process.

Such structures are vehicles for information and, in particular aspects, for exerting pressure for action to be taken. While they can influence decisions and ways of acting locally, however, they do not have any capacity to do so themselves.

Legislation on the GMI has also created the Local Support Committees, horizontal coordination structures at local level which are taken to be indispensable to the success of the measure. As would be expected, the establishment of the LSCs varies from place to place, reflecting the particular dynamics of each context. Representatives of the four areas essential to the integration process are represented on the LSC: Social Security, responsible for administering the measure and awarding the benefits, and which also includes the social (or welfare) action services which are essential for the social integration of beneficiaries, Education, Health and Employment. The LSC may also be made up of the local authority, private welfare institutions, employers and trade union groups and other non-profit-making bodies. These structures are municipal in scope, in some places perhaps requiring the establishment of even more decentralised structures (at parish level), as a way of increasing the participation of the various partners, not only to obtain greater acceptance but to achieve more effective participation by those who are to some extent already involved. There are 323 LSCs in Portugal spread throughout the whole country, corresponding to a total of almost 6 000 obligatory and non-obligatory partners.

Most of these LSCs are coordinated by a member of the staff of the Regional Social Security Office (decentralised bodies of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare) of the respective action area, although the law allows other bodies to play this role, provided the majority of partners agree. This opening up allowed by the legislation ends the state “monopoly” in terms of

implementing social security measures, though without abandoning responsibilities particular to the state.

The attributions of the LSCs and their executive board generally lie in: regulating the forms of application and functioning of the measure at local level, while defining partners' responsibilities; coordinating resources by channelling and optimising them with a view to implementing beneficiaries' integration programmes; and assessing integration programmes.

Besides the principle of participation, the composition of the LSC is based on the principles of effectiveness and efficiency - optimising existing resources to promote the social integration of beneficiaries and as such their autonomy with respect to the measure, and taking concerted action with a view to achieving the multidimensional aspect that generally characterises processes of impoverishment.

“The local committees are not only consultative bodies, they are bodies which are crucial for promoting the integration of the citizens who benefit from them. This option was not accidental. The commitment of the various local agents could contribute decisively in the short, medium and long term to many families escaping the poverty and exclusion that forced them to claim the minimum income” (Pedroso in CES, 1997: 109).

In Portugal the term “coordination” underlies other much more widely-used concepts in terms of social policy, particularly when the principles and aims of the measures applying it are analysed. Partnership or work in partnership are the terms increasingly used to designate more or less formalised structures and means of cooperation among different actors with the objective of creating new responses or a concerted response to emerging problems and contributing to local development.

In this respect experiences of local coordination between different actors and services have already been tried out in Portugal, particularly in connection with the projects developed under the Poverty III Community Programme and the national anti-poverty projects. It is the GMI, however, which is responsible for institutionalising and generalising this work in partnership.

The direction of what was until now largely a “bottom-up” approach has therefore been reversed. Since it is positive, the experience gained so far in the GMI shows that the institutions, whether public or private, function in particular ways and that there are certain personal ways of acting that “cannot be changed by decree”. Partnership and coordination are therefore processes undergoing continuous construction, transformation and development which require time - time to become established, and time to make their effects felt.

The GMI has been conceived as a right, as a guarantee of survival of citizens with the weakest resources. This right, however, is not seen as such by all the bodies that on the LSC, and at local level this is one of the most common reasons for disagreement between partners. It is also a factor of divergence between the local and central political debate, despite possible political convergence in other areas. What is at issue for some is the denial of securing the GMI as a right to which everyone is entitled, provided the conditions of eligibility are confirmed, based on a desire to maintain a certain social control and the power it confers, which is removed when there are universal pre-defined criteria, with no place for subjective assessment.

This need for a certain control which is sometimes felt is also reflected in the type of information the (non-obligatory) partners wish to have and which the rules of ethics limit access to.

Clearly the political differences in themselves, reflected at least in some places in differences of interests, also separate partners and sometimes hinder the partnership and greater exploitation of resources with a view to integrating beneficiaries. They are therefore detrimental not only to the image of the measure, since public opinion does not see it as very effective, but also to beneficiaries themselves in their integration pathway.

As a coordination structure acting in close proximity to the local situation on the ground, the LSCs provide a clear vision of the different aspects of these situations. These are on the one hand the problems of poverty and exclusion which are visible to everyone, even to those who were previously more distant from them, and on the other they are the institutions' means of action and intervention, which are also becoming more visible.

The first aspect could encourage greater mobilisation by the partners around the common objective of eradicating (or at least minimising) poverty, promoting reinforced momentum in implementing actions, innovation and bringing pressure to bear on social policies. Thus as a top-down structure the LSC generates local momentum and fosters bottom-up pressure. Such momentum, actually created in some contexts and perceived as positive, does nevertheless have its "costs". It is very often perceived by those most involved in it - the personnel of the institutions - as an additional workload, sustained only because of their professionalism. When this personnel has weak contractual relations, however, this momentum can be interrupted, and another type of cost will arise.

The second aspect can create leading roles which are not always desirable, basically a more active attitude by certain institutions towards the disadvantaged population, yet it also helps to make organisations more open to pooling experience and methodologies, thus also providing greater technical capabilities. Such openness is not always conflict-free, however, particularly when more active involvement based on a methodology that encourages participation and "empowerment" is confronted by another form of action, marked by the management of facilities and by paternalistic welfare (or rather maternalistic, given the strong presence of women in social institutions), based on a perception of poverty not as a social phenomenon but as an individual problem of groups and families who lack certain skills. The conflict could be positive if it leads to the increasing adoption of active working methods that promote the personal and social development of the weakest strata of the population, and as such their social integration.

In the Portuguese context, rather than traditionalism as regards the action of the institutions, the work done by the LSCs highlights the fragility of the personnel structure of significant sections of these institutions, which in turn imposes limitations on their action. In this respect the principle of making full use of human resources is not challenged; it does not even take place. As one interviewee said, "how can you make full use of something that doesn't exist?".

The lack of human resources and the need to produce results, bearing in mind that this policy measure has been criticised by sectors of public opinion and by certain political groups, brings pressure to bear on the services and on their personnel, and in some cases becomes a factor blocking the action and coordination itself. The intended coordination "is worn out" in the work that should be carried out but is not; planning is lost in the emergencies that have to be dealt with.

The visibility promoted by the measure creates the need and obligation for assessment, which is sometimes resisted by personnel. Assessment, if it is understood to be necessary by some people, not only as a technique for measuring impacts but also as an instrument for producing knowledge on the target population and as a method for ensuring that the action is more

effective, is avoided/not provided by others. The time taken away from the action for assessment is one of the strongest arguments for not doing it; “fear” of assessment and of its questioning of commitment is one of the most common but unexplained reasons. For many years assessment was certainly not absent from the public or private social action services, and from social policy in general. Assessment as a working method was introduced by the European anti-poverty projects and is now a generalised feature of other programmes, though it is situated in actions delimited in time and geared towards defined objectives, which was not the case of these services.

Meanwhile the services are not equipped with the means to allow them to produce information rapidly and to provide evidence of the results of their action. Although the public social action services now have a common instrument to record the information collected from beneficiaries (description of the various members of the family, identification of problems and potential, etc.), which also contains some information for individually assessing each integration programme (identification of actions in the integration programme and the results achieved), this instrument is not computerised, generating predictable operational difficulties. The computerisation of this instrument created some years ago with the active participation of the social services staff “clashes” with the difficulties of coordination between different general departments of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare. It should be added that the GMI itself has created its own instruments in view of the understandable urgency to produce information, though records are thereby duplicated.

2. Coordination practices

Although the structure of the LSC and its means of functioning are laid down by Decree Law they are very different in practice, reflecting, as stated above, the dynamics of the local institutions and the characteristics of the contexts in which they operate.

A range of factors influences greater or lesser coordination between the partners of the LSC, including: the (non) existence of prior experience of work in partnership; the priority or otherwise attributed to the GMI; the perception of poverty and social exclusion and the measure as an automatic benefit; a greater or lesser capacity to take decisions by representatives of the bodies on the LSC; greater or lesser acceptance by the CRSS hierarchies of some LSC autonomy.

One aspect seems to stand out over and above all the others, however: the profile of the person who mobilises the LSC and the way they interact with representatives of the other institutions. Partnerships are made by and between people, much more than by and between bodies. As one interviewee stated, “the partners are people”, hence coordination is not something that can be implemented by decree, since it “meddles” with individuals’ ways of being and acting; coordination between two bodies therefore sometimes also takes place in a purely informal way in which “a telephone call is enough”, “I only have to ask...”, for any issue to be resolved by means of procedures based solely and exclusively on a good relationship between two people. In many cases coordination depends on an “I”.

The capacity to stimulate and mobilise the partners around a common objective, the capacity to negotiate and resolve conflicts, mastery of a diversified range of knowledge in the social and economic area, the capacity to take full advantage of everyone’s experience, avoiding exacerbated leading roles, the capacity to take strategic decisions, awareness of the importance of joint work, the capacity to share “territories” and not to centralise too much are some of the demands facing whoever currently coordinates the minimum income LSCs. The

new challenges of contemporary social work are reflected in these demands, involving the construction of a new professional culture. At this level continuous training is required, geared towards social workers, members represented on the LSC and the staff who carry out work directly with the population.

The coordination practices exemplified in the case studies bear witness to the existence of major types of coordination.

One of these could be termed centralised management coordination with weak decision-making capacity.

The hierarchical structure of the services, particularly the CRSS, does not facilitate the autonomy of the LSC, and the latter's coordination does not have the capacity to bring pressure to bear on decisions or to take advantage of the breakdowns the system always allows.

This structure is hampered by the problems existing in the local context of its involvement and by its internal problems, and it has no capacity to draw up and implement strategies to resolve such problems.

Coordination between the partners here is limited merely to exchanging information, which is ultimately demotivating. The measure is not considered a priority, and the bodies represented on the LSC therefore hope for rather than contribute to achieving the partnership. There is no culture of partnership, and even though relations between those involved are cordial and relaxed, they each have a limited view of the real situation, restricted to their own context, and above all they want a response to the interests they feel they represent.

The benefit as a right is minimised by the negative impact of insufficient work in terms of integration. Rather than a social phenomenon, exclusion is seen as a problem created by certain individuals or groups, the explanation for its existence lying within them.

A second type is a dynamic coordination that allows responsibility to be shared and that has the capacity to take decisions.

This type of coordination has problems but has the ability to find strategies to resolve them. Coordination between the different bodies goes much further than merely exchanging information - it is able to define objectives and plan actions.

The measure is a priority around which resources are exploited to the full, policy measures are stimulated locally and new responses are created. Combating exclusion is seen as a collective task in which everyone has the duty to participate, and in this case the benefit is seen as a right. The partners construct a culture of partnership, with no need for any of them to take a leading role.

The third type of coordination is in crisis due to major disagreements between partners.

A would-be dynamic unit is opposed by a broader group of partners for whom the measure is neither a priority nor is recognised to be of interest. The integration of the beneficiaries is a duty they themselves are responsible for, and the benefit is not seen as a right, the responsibility of beneficiaries thus increasing as a result. The unit does, however, exhibit the vitality of those who wish to find a local development strategy.

3. The impact on beneficiaries

The GMI and its operation based on the local committees seem to have very positive effects on the life of beneficiaries, judging at least by the examples presented in the case studies. It must be pointed out, however, that since it is the LSCs themselves that identify the beneficiaries to be interviewed, those which are more successful are likely to have been identified.

The impact on the life of beneficiaries basically occurs at two levels: improving their living conditions and raising self-esteem, which favours the continuity of the pathways to integration.

Improvements in living conditions are manifested in the gains produced directly by the benefit itself: a reduction in indebtedness and a greater level of satisfaction of basic needs. In some cases the benefit appears not so much as the only source of income but as a supplement to income received by virtue of other welfare benefits and even from work.

The low levels of social protection in Portugal and the low wages are again highlighted as factors of poverty. In this respect the GMI may have a perverse effect, with the attendant consequences of maintaining poverty rates if it helps to keep these levels of remuneration from work and social protection low. This is precisely where questions have been raised by the trade unions.

Living conditions are also improved by some actions in the integration programmes that lead to better housing conditions and better levels of health. Improvements in health are achieved by means of easy access to services, particularly specialist consultations, and greater coverage in terms of facilities.

The LSC has a crucial role here, acting as a vehicle to facilitate such access, either by means of positive discrimination, which is possible when priority is given to the measure and thus to beneficiaries, or by identifying personnel within the services capable of directing and guiding users and in particular creating a climate that facilitates their support. Since health is a constitutionally guaranteed right it is a contradiction that there are people for whom this right is not secured due to the type of reception they get in the local health services.

Raising self-esteem meanwhile goes hand-in-hand with raising the academic and vocational qualifications of the population. Besides the importance qualifications have in terms of better professional integration by means of training, beneficiaries in fact acquire social and personal skills that make them more capable of beginning a trajectory that counteracts dependency.

In most cases in fact there is no culture of dependency in relation to the benefit. Responsibilities are generally well understood and accepted, and integration into a professional activity is seen positively. In certain cases participation in defining programmes is greater than in others, and rather than the type of coordination and performance of the LSC, the method of work of the social workers themselves, who relate to the beneficiary more directly, has an influence. Stimulating their participation is not always free of other conflicts either, these above all including how to place on the same level two positions which are different from the outset and which are strongly marked by the idea of “those who ask” and “those who give”. If the GMI as a right is designed to annul this idea, it is not always achieved, either for the member of staff, who continues to exercise power over someone, or for the beneficiary, for whom prolonged poverty and severe deprivation lead to a submissive position.

On the other hand establishing the cash benefit as a right and associating it to the right to integration fosters a demanding attitude among certain groups which is not always well received by some members of staff, who therefore have a negative image of the measure. These attitudes often subject the staff to dual pressure: pressure from the services to obtain results, and pressure from the beneficiaries who demand their integration according to the conditions they themselves wish to dictate.

Some LSCs have opted to include beneficiaries on the board, leading to greater approximation between all partners and beneficiaries and thus a common shared knowledge of the situation, a deeper knowledge of the functioning of the measure and the LSC and an awareness by beneficiaries of a commitment made jointly – beneficiary and society – by means of the representatives of the different organisations. Although it promotes participation this presence of beneficiaries on the board may also greatly inhibit them, since they do not yet have the capacity to negotiate in a context marked by a total inequality of roles.

The approach to integration within the GMI is multidimensional. There is no doubt that this aspect is possible by using a project-based methodology based in particular on the presence of partners from the different areas. This sometimes means that a single problem identified by beneficiaries can lead to other hardships being detected and a range of relationships being established between the different problems-causes of poverty. The integration pathways also become more consistent and coherent in this way.

In the various examples cited and in others that we are aware of, a multiplicity of actions covers different areas: housing, when houses do not have minimum conditions; education, when the recipient or a family member does not have at least the basic levels of education, or when children are not covered by facilities; training or employment with a view to vocational integration; medical care when necessary, etc..

The process of integrating beneficiaries also brings two further dimensions into focus.

One is related to time: time for integration to be accomplished, which very often means not only a process of academic or vocational training but also a process of personal transformation (which involves working with a view to autonomy). The time required for integration depends very much on the initial situation of individuals and families, which must be taken into consideration. Time available for staff to support beneficiaries in complying with their programmes is also required.

The second relates to resources: human resources to ensure the integration of beneficiaries, material resources, facilities, actions and programmes to accomplish the integration programmes.

The human resources aspect has been highlighted throughout this report as one of the principal shortcomings identified by different actors as regards the GMI, and this shortcoming has perverse effects at various levels. By causing a build-up of claims accepted without a contract or an integration programme, it means that situations requiring immediate action are lost and that on the other hand a notion contrary to the policy proclaimed is created, i.e., that of a right-duty of integration, where the aspect of duty is annulled. The beneficiaries distance themselves from the duty and a culture of dependency is fostered. Public opinion has a negative image of the measure and of the population groups most responsible for this lack of duty, and responsibilities are attributed to them for that very reason, increasing their social stigmatisation. It should be noted, however, that such groups do not in fact operate outside the law, they operate in the loopholes created by the system itself.

The lack or shortage of resources meanwhile greatly limits the opportunities for integration. Rather than adapting to each situation, in some cases the programmes adapt to the resources available.

Some innovations have been achieved, however, particularly by the area of employment, which has constantly sought new means of training more closely adapted to the GMI target public. The employment and training services were in fact not accustomed to working with this population, due on the one hand to the latter's low levels of education, which immediately excluded them from many training programmes, and on the other due to their difficulty in accessing the employment services, either because of lack of information or due to the social divide that separates this population from the services.

While in other research work on partnership issues the employment services have been considered as less favourable to the establishment of relationships with other bodies, this appears to be changing. The question remains, however, of how far some of the difficulties of integrating/retaining people such as GMI beneficiaries are due only to the lack of measures appropriate to them in terms of selection criteria, for example, rather than to a range of procedures and training methods that are not adjusted to the actual principles of the measure.

What is important in any event is to promote the involvement of a diversified range of agents in creating a local climate of integration.

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