

NETWORK FOR INCLUSIVE CITIES IN EUROPE (NICE)

– PROPOSAL TO COST PROGRAMME –

1.1. ACTION OUTLINE

1.1.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE CHALLENGE (MAIN AIM)

Network for Inclusive Cities in Europe (NICE) aims to improve scientific knowledge on urban exclusion and to identify and disseminate the best practices that lead to making cities in participating countries more inclusive and to combatting deprivation. The Network's objective is to initiate a discussion on a new paradigm of development, one which is based on the existing development potential of contemporary cities, the openness of which effectively eliminate the threats of exclusion and alienation of individuals; it also reduces the effects of radicalisation of behaviours and attitudes of national governments, thus being supportive of convergence processes.

Selection criteria

The discussions and analyses within the proposed Action will concentrate on **Second Tier Cities (STCs)** which are characterised by a high development potential, are internationally competitive and have significant potential for creating territorial impacts for development.

Second Tier Cities are the most numerous group of cities which develop supra-local functions and which create a network of international contacts, thus attaining a greater probability of development [Camagni *et al.* 2015, s. 1069–1089]. These territorial units are based on the territorial potential and being rooted in local institutions. They are actively involved in contemporary megatrends related to: Experience Economy, Creative Milieus, Sharing Economy (Sharing City), Virtual Economy, "Mega" Mobility and Migrations, EcoEconomy and EcoInnovations. On the other hand, these phenomena uncover, to an unprecedented scale, the processes of deprivation and, as a consequence, various types of exclusion of city users. Some of these processes may have impacts on development processes that have not yet been identified.

On the other hand, the Action will concentrate on those STCs that have accumulated experience relative to **urban renewal projects**, as these are the cities that possess the greatest capacity for developing and implementing (testing) innovative solutions to emerging problems, including those related to various types of exclusion.

The Action will bring together academics, local government officials and representatives of non-governmental organisations from different cities representing mostly European countries. Furthermore, the Action will support creation of local capacities for generating and disseminating best practices of dealing with issues of exclusion in order to maximise the impact of research.

Main subject of analysis

The areas where problems related to exclusion of specified groups of inhabitants, unable to meet their basic needs, have already been identified or are expected to face such challenges in the near future shall become the core subject for discussions and analyses within the Network.

Exclusion may negatively affect individuals as well as urban societies or entire countries, possibly even the whole of the EU. The basic types of exclusion that are considered in the project are:

Digital exclusion [WG1: DE]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to access (lack of competences and/or physical restrictions) • lack of infrastructure
Cultural exclusion [WG2: CE]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to access cultural institutions • Cultural enclosure (ethnic and religious, gender) • Intolerance for culture diversity
Housing exclusion [WG3: HE]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houslessness • Rooflessness • Insecurity • Inadequacy of available housing
Labour market exclusion [WG4: LME]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mismatch between individual competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and labour market requirements • Insecurity (unstable employment) • Mismatch between individual values and organizational culture (free time, employment, work-life balance) • Discrimination (age, gender, health, race/ethnic)
Environmental exclusion [WG5: EE]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted access to green infrastructure • Restricted access to blue infrastructure • Restricted access to green energy

Source: prepared by the authors.

1.1.2. RELEVANCE AND TIMELINESS

The Europe 2020 strategy is implemented by means of seven flagship initiatives: (1) Innovation Union, (2) Youth on the move, (3) Digital agenda for Europe, (4) Resource efficient Europe, (5) An industrial policy for the globalisation era, (6) An agenda for new skills and jobs as well as (7) European platform against poverty.

Social inclusion is also a key factor in the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. One of its targets is to promote the instruments and solutions which ensure that the city users are fully included in social as well as economic spheres of life and thus in broadly defined activities for development. The fast changing urban environments of large cities create numerous enclaves of exclusion and deprivation where specific groups of city users find it difficult to satisfy their social and other needs. The proposed COST Action aims to identify, collect and disseminate examples of good practices with regards to eliminating various types of exclusion which is caused by:

- economic factors; in that respect the proposed COST Action will support:
 - minimizing the scope of poverty in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and the actions of the European Commission which supports these objectives through the European platform against poverty and social exclusion launched in 2010;
 - elimination of deprivation resulting from the permanent lack of access to services which are necessary to satisfy the basic social needs;
 - minimizing the phenomena of housing exclusion and including homelessness;
- cultural factors which are determined by migrations, increasing mobility of human capital, cultural as well as religious diversity;
- awareness-based, related to people's age and the pace of technological change;
- demographic, determined by the specificity of the ageing society in Europe.

The proposed COST Action – Network for Inclusive Cities in Europe (NICE) – relates directly also to the third priority of the Horizon 2020 programme (Societal Challenges) which emphasises – amongst others – challenges related to:

- health, demographic change and wellbeing;
- secure, clean and efficient energy;
- Europe in a changing world – inclusive, innovative and reflective societies;
- Secure societies – protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. RESEARCH COORDINATION OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the Network is to identify and disseminate best practices relative to eliminating various types of exclusion (specified in item 1.1.1.) by initiating co-operation between stakeholders involved in development of local strategies for combatting exclusion (academics, local government officials and representatives of non-governmental organisations).

1.2.2. CAPACITY-BUILDING OBJECTIVES

The capacity building objectives which the completion of the proposed action will help achieve include:

- establishing a platform for exchange of knowledge and expertise in combatting various types of exclusion in European cities;
- ensuring an inter-disciplinary approach to impact assessment analysis for proposed best practices, bridging economics, sociology, town/spatial planning, etc.;
- Supporting early career investigators (ECIs) and ensuring gender balance of researchers from COST Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs) as well as COST Near Neighbour Countries (NNCs).

2. WORKING GROUPS WITHIN THE ACTION

Each of the partners of the Action will participate in the activities of at least one of the Working Groups (WG1, WG2, WG3, WG4 and/or WG5) in line with their experience, expertise and interests. Participants of each of the Working Groups will contribute diverse knowledge and expertise allowing them to create multi-disciplinary groups of experts. An interdisciplinary nature of each Working Group will ensure a broad and comprehensive approach to problems which appear in the context of various types of exclusions leading to identification of differentiated best practices in combating exclusion and its negative effects.

Each of the Working Groups will include different stakeholders (i.e. academics, representatives of public sector institutions, NGOs, local leaders, entrepreneurs etc.) who will be working together to achieve specified goals set out for each WG. The Action also aims at exchanging knowledge, experiences and good practices with regards to various types of exclusion covered by the project. There will be considerable synergies between the different WGs in the form of joined workshops and conferences. This will enable creating a complete overview of complex phenomena related to urban exclusion but also designing procedures for combatting exclusion and deprivation of different type. As a result the Action will contribute to making cities in participating countries more inclusive.

Each Working Group (WG1:DE, WG2:CE, WG3:HE, WG4:LME, WG5:EE) will implement a twin activity plan concentrated on two main areas:

- **sectoral activities**
implementation of activities in the field of each WG (digital exclusion, cultural exclusion, housing exclusion, labour market exclusion, environmental exclusion); sectoral activities will be managed by leaders and vice-leaders of particular WGs;
- **horizontal activities**
these activities will be conducted in all WGs and are related in particular to:
 - carrying out STSMs, RWs, TSs and ICs;
 - dissemination activities concentrating on the Action's outputs and recruitment of additional members of the Action; implementation and usage of internet tools will be conducted within WG1 (an inclusive cities platform will be created, among others), but all WGs will participate, i.e. by means of preparing materials, information and other materials related to different types of exclusion, participating in webinars and contributing to social media; horizontal activities will be managed by coordinators and co-coordinators.

The work of each of the WGs will be preceded by introductory activities performed by the Core Group (CG). The CG will be composed of, *inter alia*, the Action Chair and Vice-Chair, leaders of WGs and will select the second-tier cities which are undergoing the processes of urban renewal and which will be subject of analysis by each of the Working Groups.

3. INITIATING TEAM

The group of the Action's initiators consists of academics affiliated with the University of Lodz (Poland) who are actively involved in research on broadly defined local and regional development. Many of us specialise in issues of city development and functioning which are fully consistent with the scope of the proposed COST project. We have accumulated practical experience of preparing various types of strategic documents with and for local governments of different types (level), including urban renewal plans and/or strategies.

Representatives of the initiating team (one or two) plan to participate in each of the five Working Groups. It is also our ambition to lead and coordinate the entire Action – given our experience in international cooperation and expertise in issues of city development and, in particular, exclusion-related issues.

Our team consists of both experienced researchers as well as five Early Career Investigators (ECIs).

We will guarantee that representatives of NGOs, public authorities and entrepreneurs from second-tier cities will join the Action, thus allowing a comprehensive overview of the analysed issues. There are about 10 cities in Poland which may be considered as second-tier cities and where urban renewal processes took or are currently taking place. These cities will provide plentiful data for the Action's purpose.

CONTACT PERSONS

Justyna Danielewicz, PhD

Department of City and Regional Management
Faculty of Management
University of Lodz
e-mail: justyna.danielewicz@uni.lodz.pl

Zbigniew Przygodzki, PhD

Department of Regional Economics and Environmental Protection
Faculty of Economics and Sociology
University of Lodz
e-mail: zbigniew.przygodzki@uni.lodz.pl

Dorota Sikora-Fernandez, PhD

Department of City and Regional Management
Faculty of Management
University of Lodz
e-mail: dorota.sikora@uni.lodz.pl

Maciej Turala, PhD

Department of City and Regional Management
Faculty of Management
University of Lodz
e-mail: maciej.turala@uni.lodz.pl

Małgorzata Żak-Skwierczyńska, PhD

Department of City and Regional Management
Faculty of Management
University of Lodz
e-mail: malgorzata.zak@uni.lodz.pl