

Evaluation of the Social Network Programme

Summary of Report

2005

Evaluation of the Social Network Programme – Summary of Report

Presentation

This document constitutes the summary of the Report of the Study of "Social Network Programme Evaluation", carried out by the Territorial Centre Studies for the Solidarity and Social Security Institute.

In accordance with the contract, the purpose of the study focuses on the Programme's local implementation process and its empirical purpose relates to the Municipality members Social Network until 15th November, 2003.

The proposed evaluation model is based on the conviction that "Evaluation" should not be consumed by its measurement function. It is believed, instead, that in addition to being able to count on an important element of support in taking a decision, it constitutes (it should constitute) an opportunity and form of training and learning. This stance is deemed so much more relevant as we stand here at the level of public policy evaluation.

Thus, as well as looking at the results in the conception of that evaluation model, at the same time, it was also sought to define a methodological strategy capable of learning the dynamics generated by the process of implementation of the Social Network. As a reference, the evaluation model was structured with a basis in formal evaluation criteria, in that the team from the Territorial Studies Centre conducted itself by strict criteria of astringency and independence.

This summary report is structured into three main points:

- presentation of the purposes of the study of "Evaluation of the Social Network Programme" and the evaluation indicators,
- presentation of the main conclusions,
- formulation of strategic recommendations.

This report, while constituting a summary, does not do away with reading the Final Report, in the sense that this is the document that analyses all information, which substantiates the evaluation conclusions and strategic recommendations formulated.

1. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA

The general and specific objectives defined for the “Evaluation of the Social Network programme” were the following:

2. To analyze the regulatory legal structure of the Social Network Programme

2.1 To comparatively analyze the prerequisites and objectives underlying the regulatory legal structure of the Social Network (legal diplomas) with the dynamics of change effectively driven at a local level by means of adhesion to the Social Network;

3. To analyze the degree of carrying out the principles and objectives underlying the Social Network Programme

3.1 To assess the correlation between the “founding” principles and objectives of the Social Network programme and the projects undertaken locally;

3.2 To analyze perceptions existing locally (municipalities, public services, non-profit private organizations, etc) about strong and weak points in implementation of the social Network at the municipal level;

3.3 To analyze perceptions existing locally (municipalities, public services, non-profit private organizations, etc) about difficulties and obstacles in implementation of the social Network at the municipal level;

3.4 To assess diagnostic and planning methodologies adopted at a local level, ascertaining the degree of local participation to which they were called for/driven;

3.5 To assess the relevance given by local social players to Information Systems in the area of the Social Network, as well as the degree of their use;

3.6 To analyze to what extent the implementation of the Social Network at the municipal level (particularly the definition of the Social Development Plan) promoted/deepened the articulation with other planning devices and/or of intervention at a local and/or national level;

3.7 To identify and systematize good practices and innovative experiences linked to implementation of the Social Network at a municipal level.

3. To analyze the suitability and effectiveness of the technical support provided by the Social Network core team for projects and local teams

3.1. To analyze and compare expectations (mutual) between the Social Network core team and the local programme implementation teams at the municipal level;

3.2. To analyze the degree of satisfaction of the local teams as regards the materials and technical means of support made available by the Social Network core team;

3.3. To analyze the degree of satisfaction of the local teams as regards support and on-site monitoring provided by the Social Network core team.

4. To analyze the organizational and procedural models adopted locally

4.1. To analyze models of internal organization adopted (decision making structures, channels and means of information and consultancy, training, internal management tools,) at a local level;

4.2. To analyze, in particular, the organizational model between CLAS and CSF and the degree of articulation that they manage to achieve;

4.3. To analyze in what way the implementation of the Social Network at the municipal level was at the source and/or deepened job networks in partnership among the different local social players;

4.4. To measure up to what point, the local implementation of the Social Network gave rise to articulations/sharing of supra-municipality source.

5. To measure the effective impact of the Social Network Programme

5.1. To analyze in what way implementation of the Social Network at the municipal level promoted and/or deepened the creation of synergy among local social players and sharing their technical, material, logistic and human resources etc. (profitability of resources);

5.2. To analyze in what way implementation of the Social Network at the municipal level made the sharing of experiences and good practices possible in terms of methods and work methodologies;

5.3. To analyze up to what point the teams at the municipal level generated or have put into operation evaluation indicators and tools which allow them to be monitoring the degree of achievement of the defined purposes in the action plans (in the case of the municipalities, a plan of action which is defined and in progress);

5.4. To assess to what extent the results obtained correspond to the objectives which had been defined (municipalities with an action plan in progress).

6. Production of Strategic Recommendations

6.1. To formulate a set of strategic recommendations aimed at eventual alterations in the Programme itself, properly supported by results obtained upon implementation of the proposed evaluation model.

The definition of the evaluation criteria and analytical dimensions to fit in the sphere of carrying out the 'Evaluation of the Social Network Programme', as well as options in terms of methodological strategy made up the carrying out of an assessment fully participated in by the national and local agents involved in the implementation of the Social Network in different municipalities. In accordance with the assessment design proposed, the main assessment indicators were suitability, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

ASSESSMENT INDICATORS
<p>SUITABILITY</p> <p>From the standpoint of conception, does the Programme show itself suitable in regards the context of the problems and situations about which it aims to intervene?</p> <p>Is it a programme consistent in its internal construction and formulation, namely, in what relates to the clarity of the defined objectives, to the availability of resources, to the organizational model (assignment of responsibilities and functions), to the model of technical monitoring and to the implementation strategy?</p>
<p>RELEVANCE</p> <p>Is the design of the Programme best suited to the assumptions of the theoretical and methodological guidelines?</p>
<p>EFFECTIVENESS</p> <p>To what extent do the results obtained and the actions carried out embody the purposes initially defined by the Programme?</p>
<p>EFFICIENCY</p> <p>To what extent do the results obtained and the actions carried out use the means/resources initially foreseen by the Programme?</p> <p>Were the means/resources deployed sufficient?</p>
<p>IMPACT</p> <p>To what degree has the Programme attained the results desired?</p> <p>Did the Programme get results which were not expected?</p> <p>Are innovation factors highlighted from the Programme's implementation, namely, in what relates to the institutions involved, work methodologies, ways of inter-institutional relationships, partnership dynamics, areas of articulation and target public on which it seeks to intervene?</p>

2. CONCLUSIONS

SUITABILITY, CONSISTENCY AND RELEVANCE

SUITABILITY, INTERNAL CONSISTENCY AND VULNERABILITY FACTORS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION CONDITIONS OF THE SOCIAL NETWORK PROGRAMME¹

If tackling poverty and exclusion is a common objective in many other programmes, on linking it to a perspective of promotion of local social development, the Social Network Programme establishes a differentiating and innovating factor in regards many others.

To a certain degree, it fits into the sphere, which some writers call 'new social policies', representing a proposal to break with more traditional ways of intervening (even if these, in the present context, should not be considered residual or negligible). It is defined more of welfare and remedial intervention visions, generally more restrictive, because, ignoring the multi-dimensionality of the social problems, they propose segmented and piecemeal responses and solutions. A conception of social policy is thus defined, centred on 'mere' operation of redistribution measures, proposing, as an alternative, an integrated and systemic approach of social development, for the promotion of social welfare.

On fitting into this conceptual framework, it also incorporates the notion of the specificities of the socio-territorial contexts and, in this sense, the need to fit the social development projects to specific socio-economic and cultural contexts. Thus, it appeals to the territorialisation of the operation and, consistently, proposes a methodology which, with a basis in the aggregate analysis of the problems, resources and relational and existing intervention networks, supports an integrated, participative and sustainable social development project.

On the other hand, in its conceptual framework, the Social Network Programme conceptualizes 'development' as a product of a complex, dynamic, uncertain, negotiated and generative game among multiple actors who are placed in the system of operation with specific interests and purposes, at times, conflicting. Thus, it significantly anchors those projects of social development in processes widely communicated and in the establishment of strategic local partnerships (public and private agents), sustained in strategic planning processes, which make feasible the profitability of resources and the promotion of articulated and integrated interventions.

1. For a detailed analysis of the results obtained, see particularly, II Presentation of Results, Chapters 1, 2.3., 2.4 and 2.5 of the Final Report

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From this standpoint, the Social Network Programme is consistent in its internal construction, also structuring, with regards to the scant qualification of the body of technicians in the area of participative methodologies and strategic planning, a model of technical support and monitoring to the local teams, by means of which it is proposed to support these in all phases of implementation of the Social Network at a local level.

The deregulation of the Council of Ministers Resolution that is at the source of the Programme, would be able to be, from the outset, however, as a factor of vulnerability of its conditions of implementation, in the sense in which, by the different 'strengths' of the various legal devices, that fact could be transmitted to the ground the idea that it was not a programme which, institutionally, one attributed a structured character.

On the other hand, on forwarding to the local level, the need of promoting integrated multi-sectorial policies does not explicitly reveal a homologous investment in terms of institutional articulation at the Central Administration level.

Some tension thus emerges between a perspective more directed for the promotion of social development and the apparent 'reduction' in the area of intervention of the 'Social Action' Programme. Such is the perspective which seems to be legitimated by the very institutional allocation of the Programme. Simultaneously, the non regulation of the Council of Ministers Resolution seems to contribute to accentuate the perception of some apparent inconsistency and this tension will not be, possibly, foreign to the relative 'resignation' of the politicians in charge given the development of the programme. Such resignation will compete for the non achievement of 'ambition' elaborated for local operation.

On the other hand, responsibility for implementation of the Plan of Social Development also comes not specified, that is, it is not clear on which differentiated skills preventative and restorative action depends in the sphere of combating poverty and social exclusion. This tension Will tend to manifest itself in a clear way in the intervention in spheres such as, for example, the "economic" when one is dealing with promoting job access. As, in contemporary conditions, access to work tends to depend increasingly on new employment, and as new employment tends to depend upon new company initiative (including the initiative of the very same) requires clarification the identification of the entity that can assume the "excitement of a new corporate initiative" as perspective of operation (that places itself over and above the involvement of companies presently existing in the partnerships being extended).

EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY AND IMPACT

DIFFERENTIATED, BUT GROWING ASSIMILATION AND INCORPORATION OF THE PROGRAMME'S ACTION PRINCIPLES

Whilst not every local team display the same degree of assimilation and operationalization of the Programme's action principles, data collected throughout the evaluation process shows a gradual incorporation of those principles in their conceptual framework and in their intervention practices. It is notorious that in the majority of cases there was an investment on the part of the local teams in the promotion of diagnostic and participatory planning processes, even though, in practice, participation levels reached in each municipality are differentiated, because conditioned by different kinds of factors: (un)availability/ (lack)motivation of some local social players, difficulties with coordination of schedules, difficulties in the domain of some technical methodologies, degree of adhesion of directors and heads, difficulties of management of the process, etc.

Given that the Social Network Programme promotes rupture factors with consolidated forms and models of organization and division of work, while an evaluation indicator is considered, however, as important as the participation levels effectively reached, as the local perception of its importance, in the sense in which it renders, on one hand, that it was not seen as the mere fulfilment of a formal requirement of the Programme, while on the other, that the gains in terms of reflection capacity and of strategic intervention linked to the promotion of locally participated processes are recognized and valued. In other words, from the point of view of evaluation, it is considered particularly important that even in cases where levels of participation reached were not so extended, there is on the part of local players, this recognition and perception that it is a dimension to deepen in the future of the local partnership.

The promotion of local strategic partnerships is a significantly valued dimension by the vast majority of the local players who, repeatedly, point to it as the main strong point and advantage associated with the local implementation of the Social Network. From the point of view of evaluation, the 'vigilance level' is considered particularly relevant which tends to be maintained on the process and on the dynamics of these partnerships: frequently, there is the identification of adjustment factors and correction mechanisms which they judge necessary to introduce into their organizational model, in a way as to improve their intervention. As it was stated, this aspect is valued, in the sense that where it is determined that it express the capacity of reflecting on the actual process and not only on results, that is, it expresses awareness that promotion of the improvement of intervention (results)

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also demands the reflective capacity on the process in a way as to, permanently, discern as to which correction/adaptation factors should be activated.

Up until the present, the main innovative elements powered by the Social Network Programme are linked to the introduction of diagnostic and participated planning techniques, to the drawing up of the social Diagnostic and to the Social Development Plan, and even to the involvement of an enlarged set of local bodies (public and private). Even so, and even though with a more punctual character, also at the level of intervention itself are discernible innovative factors: (attempts) of introduction of elements of rupture with dominant institutional cultures, sharing of resources, creation of mechanisms of co-responsibility among partners, transition from an intervention and reflection logic (intra)sectorial to a thematic logic (multisectorial), etc.

The principle of subsidiarity, widely valued and assimilated by local players, as well as innovative factors in terms of organizational structures collide, frequently with dominant organizational cultures: logics of verticalized and hierarchical operations, centralized decision-making in the senior hierarchical levels of Public Administration, 'separation' between technicians and bosses, closures of institutions and bodies over themselves.

PROMOTION, CONSOLIDATION AND RESIZING OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS OF A LOCAL BASE²

The dynamics stimulated by the Social Network at the level of the dynamics of the networks are variable from one municipality to another by virtue of factors such as the relational networks/work networks that in each one pre-existed, of the available resources, of greater or lesser adhesion of institutions or bodies with intervention structured at a lower level, of the greater or lesser involvement of bosses and local elected, of greater or lesser capacity which local structures had to involve and dynamize the sharing bodies, etc.

Safeguarding this diversity of situations (which translate afterwards, into practice, in different degrees of absorption of the other strategic objectives of the Social Network Programme) it is important to say, clearly, that all data gathered throughout the evaluation point, in the sense of Social Network implementation, to the municipal level to have motivated important alterations in terms of local partnership networks. Meanwhile an indicator of effectiveness is, then an element to retain.

²For a detailed analysis of the results achieved, see, namely, II Presentation of Results, Chapters 2.4, 2.6 and 2.7. of the Final Report.

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If in some cases the very constitution of these work networks arises from implementation of the Social Network, in the majority what is observed are alterations that the Programme induces in the pre-existing partnership dynamics. At this level, to be pointed out, above all, are the gains in terms of inter-sectoral intervention (growing integration of bodies 'traditionally' separated from social intervention), the enlargement of the number of bodies involved in the work networks, the consolidation/formalization of the pre-existing partnership relationships (streamlining of inter-institutional articulation, improvement of channels of information circulation, etc.), but also, in some cases, significantly, the re-orientation of partnerships of a level 'merely' operational to a strategic perspective of intervention.

INCIPIENT SUPRA-MUNICIPAL ARTICULATION AND WITH OTHER PLANNING TOOLS³

The progressive articulation with other planning tools in the local, regional or national sphere is a domain in which, in general, benefits are not yet significant.

Domains of articulation are restricted, roughly speaking, to consultation and gathering of data contained in other deeds and local plans (and in relation to the Social Network, to consultation of the Social Diagnostic and Social Development Plan), but rarely does one see the effective establishment of work relationships between those teams and, in this sense, an investment in articulation with other teams and planning tools (including the National Plan of Action for Inclusion).

Among local social networks, the establishment of contacts with teams from other municipalities is frequently seen, but articulation domains tend to be restricted to exchanges of information, requests for clarification, etc, and not to resource sharing, planning/ common projects implementation, etc.

This situation will be able, medium term, to become deterrent of a qualitative jump of the social Networks as instruments of local policy. Indeed, its over localization impedes visualizing development and equipment dimensions in the regional sphere, being also deterrent of its presence in instances of more structured planning as, for example, the present "negotiations" for the next community support framework.

³For a detailed analysis of the results achieved, see, namely, II Presentation of Results, Chapters 2.5. of the Final Report.

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To some extent, the experience seems to show the exhaustion trend of the Programme while the Social Policy programme, seeing that its reach seems to go further. Beyond its contribution in the specific area of Active Social Policies, the challenges that the programme involves contains implications for the set of public policies, for a consistent and integrated operation in the territorial municipal units. The Social Diagnostic and Social Development Plan involve concerns with analysis and intervention considering preventative and reparatory action against poverty and social exclusion which, in consistency, cannot be confined to the sphere of social policies, even if their formulation is found in the domain of active social policies.

If promotion of development in the municipalities is to include social development as one of the dimensions to explicitly and necessarily observe, then the Social Development Plan (PDS) should be accepted by the Municipal Directors Plans (PDM) in the framework of the Municipal Plans for Territorial Planning (PMOT), indeed the municipal "duties and powers" in the field of development have in the PDM their specific action tool. The present context for revision of the Municipal directors Plans is favourable to an explanation and incorporation of this perspective, but, in that the PDS prepared in partnership, involving the operation of different bodies, there are clarifications to be introduced. Anyway, the PDM will always be able to welcome the PDS operational dimensions which are shown compatible with the duties, powers and resources of the Town Halls.

VALUATION OF THE METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS CONCEIVED, BUT IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS IN THE SUPPORT AND TECHNICAL MONITORING⁴

As an evaluation indicator, more important than the 'mere' fulfilment recognition of a formal requirement (requirement, under the Support Programme to the Implementation of the Social Network, of conception of the diagnostic and planning documents), it was to gauge of the importance that the local teams tend to attribute, on the one hand, to those tools (above all the Social Diagnostic and the Plan of Social Development), and on the other, the relevancy which they confer to the adoption of participative techniques and of strategic planning methodologies.

In addition to some of the municipalities constituting the first documents of this type (which, by themselves alone, would constitute relevant data), it appears that on the part of the partnering bodies, they act, effectively as

⁴For a detailed analysis of the results obtained, see particularly, II Presentation of Results, Chapters 2.2.of the Final Report.

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working papers, in some cases founded and guided the intervention.

Overall, it appears that the preparation of these documents was translated into an advantage in terms of capacity to reflect strategically about the territory and on the municipal intervention, despite its 'translation' in terms of strategic intervention, or rather, their effective execution, being subject to constraints and obstacles de ordem diversa, frequently leading to some dissatisfaction and demotivation on the part of the institution's technicians and local authorities. The lack of training and/or inexperience of working with these methodologies was, however, geradora de high expectations in terms of technical support and supervision provided by the central technical team.

From the standpoint of effectiveness, some deficiencies appeared, especially, at the level of presence of technical support and supervision, these shortcomings generating some insecurity in the local teams, but whose source lies not in the availability shown by technicians from the central team, but especially, in the non reinforcement of that team as the implementation of the Programme was widened throughout the country (efficiency).

In designing the model for monitoring, the resource to the video-meeting was anticipated (for which, resources were made available in the area of the Support Programme for the Implementation of the Social Network), an option which ended up not being very used, but which in the majority of cases, local teams also did not value.

To a certain extent, the minimization of these deficiencies was also made possible by the above-mentioned Support Programme, through which, local social networks could resort to external careful consideration.

In spite of the identification of difficulties and obstacles, it is important to say that up until now, the implementation of the Social Network at the local level has already contributed to the training and qualification of a broad range of technicians involved in the local development process developed in the Social Network area (for some Parish Councils, implementation of the Social Network constituted, furthermore, the first chance to contract technicians, and consequently, to be able to assume some more action oriented social intervention).

PROMOTION OF INTEGRATED STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESSES: DIFFICULTIES IN SUPPLANTING CONSTRAINTS OF AN INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL NATURE (DOMINANT ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND LEVELS OF ARTICULATION OF CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION)⁵

Changes brought on by the Social Network at the level of local work partnership networks must be recognized. It is also important to be alerted to the fact that the benefits in terms of strategic planning do not always allow an equivalent range and impact. If in many cases it was effectively verified that an investment in methodologies and integrated participatory planning techniques, simultaneously, it is observed that, at times, understanding of the relevance of strategic planning and, consequently, their incorporation into work practices, confined to the level of the technicians, that is, whose relevance was not recognized and/or assimilated by the decision making levels. The logic of 'horizontality' proposed by the Social Network collide, clearly, with dominant organizational culture(s), still very much distinguished by strongly verticalized and hierarchical structures, and guided by intra-institutionality and intra-sectoriality. This conflict (which at times shows itself in a concealed form, at other times obvious) constitutes one of the biggest obstacles to the municipal implementation of the Social Network, indeed, frequently, places the process in situations of impasse.

This confrontation with established organized cultures is manifest in various ways and is echoed on various levels:

- The non-involvement of some leaders in the process of the Social Network (or their indirect involvement via delegation of powers of representation), linked to the concentration of decision making, means that at times, approval of a network document may be barely 'binding' to that institution; in addition, in the case of institutions with structured intervention at the local level, their absence be frequently understood as a sign of disbelief attributed to the Social Network,
- at the level of Public Administration, also from concentration of decision making at upper hierarchical levels, prevents local leaders from being committed at times with structured initiatives and projects (for example, those entered in the Action Plans),

⁵For a detailed analysis of the results obtained, see particularly, II Presentation of Results, Chapters 1.1., 1.2., 2.3., 2.5 e 2.6. of the Final Report.

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- the non binding nature of the Social Development Plan and opinions of the Social Network 'legitimize' the maintaining of intervention perspectives, at times, casuistic, poorly integrated and technically, poorly substantiated, as well as the closure of some institutions and bodies on themselves,
- some disarticulation in terms of various sectors of the Central Administration leads, at times, to an overlapping of partnerships, projects and initiatives at a local level which make the adoption of a strategic, integrated and articulate perspective of local social development and the rationalization of resources difficult,
- the legal regulation of the Programme (Council of Ministers Resolution No. 197/97 dated 18th November) consecrating the principle of free adhesion 'legitimizes' the non involvement of public institutions with structured intervention at the local level clearly conditioning in some areas possible planning intervention,
- The allocation of management responsibility of the national Programme to a specific ministry and, especially, the non existence of formal and publically visible inter-ministerial articulations, transmitted to the ground a 'sign' (incorrect) which dealt with a restrictive initiative to 'social action', that is, precisely, a contrary sign, however, to that which the Social Network was seeking to induce: that of the need for integrated social policies.

If for these motives it was claimed that the benefits in terms of effective strategic planning capacity are not always directly proportional to the gains at the level of stimulation of local partnership networks, this does not preclude rupture factors already introduced by the implementation of the Social Network are also pointed out. Furthermore, it is precisely for this confrontation with dominant organizational cultures that it is considered that those factors are still more relevant (cases of effective intervention co-ordination between public and private local players, allocation of percentages of the budget from certain institutions to the Social Network Action Plan, direct and active participation of some leaders and local elected ones in the Social Network, coordination of the various institutional partnerships at a local base (minimizing intervention overlap, profitability of resources etc.).

Even if not in a generalized form, it is important to point out that the Social Network managed to drive forward at a local level a degree of policy integration which, very rarely, emanate from the Central Administration.

In spite of all the constraints, continuation of the local social networks

in some municipalities the Implementation Support Programme can not also stop, in this context, being seen as a sign of recognition of relevance acknowledged by local players to a new logic of (re)thinking intervention and local social development.

GREATER ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIAL RESPONSES⁶

Impact associated with the municipal implementation of the Social Network seems to be structured in two main axes with predominance of the first, but with a clear causal link between both: first of all, the largest organizational effectiveness (the strengthening of local partnership networks) and, as a consequence of this, benefits at the level of social responses (associated above all to streamlining, diversification and growing integration of those responses/services, as well as to the implementation of new projects, operations and/or services). Even if at first sight it can seem strange that an eminently procedural element of nature (organizational effectiveness) might be considered an impact, it is important to recall that, by the innovation domains that the Programme was proposing to activate, part of their strategic and specific objectives was technical-methodological. If in the medium term this should not constitute an objective in and of itself, in the present context and perante the multiple constraints to which references were made above, it is considered that this is a relevant impact of local implementation of the Programme, even because it is already emerging, in some cases, in the source of impact at the level of the local population.

Beyond the impact on the very logic of organization of some services, making them more flexible to becoming more open to and more participative with other institutions/local entities, one should also make reference to some intra-institutional effects, especially at the level of the municipalities.

Although it still might be shown in a timely manner, there are cases where it is seen that, through implementation of the Social Network and, in particular, of work promoted by different local structures, there is a gradual awareness by a growing number of technicians of the importance of promoting measures/multi-sector projects, through which also here leading to some breakdown factors with organizational forms and segmentation of labour, promoting deepening of inter-departmental relational networks.

If in some cases, coordination of local structures of the Network have already contributed to

⁶For a detailed analysis of the results obtained, see particularly, II Presentation of Results, Chapters 2.7. of the Final Report.

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a better coverage of services and equipment in the municipalities, this is a 'quantum leap' which, with the current institutional and legal framework, the Social Network seems not to have the capacity to ensure a sustainable and widespread way. If, in theory, Social Development Plans, while municipal planning tools, are the craving for excellence of social equipment planning, in practice, not having similar weight, for example, as the Municipal Directors Plans in terms of their socio-territorial management character, their scope can be compromised. It is believed that herein lies one of the main challenges which the Social Network is facing.

Another challenge is posed in terms of innovation capacity at the operation level. Given the outset context, much of the effort and investment by the Social Network local structures has been oriented towards improving coordination of local action and for its increasing integration and articulation; in terms of the future, it is important to generate increasingly innovative social responses starting here (innovation in the process and innovation in operation).

SOCIAL NETWORK PROGRAMME: CONTRIBUTION TO REDEFINING SOCIAL POLICIES

Setting up a proposal to break with more traditional intervention forms, in the national context, the Social Network defines itself as an ambitious and innovating programme at the social policy level, appealing not only to the global reconceptualization of intervention, such as (re)defining the place of social policies in regards other development policies (economic, environmental, cultural development, etc.)

By its very nature (which derives from its action principles such as its defined methodological strategy for its implementation), it faces a series of constraints and obstacles on the ground, both local and national, contextual and organizational, which necessarily condition its results in the short term. Furthermore, since for its 'integral' implementation, it must induce factors of breaking with dominant, consolidated, organizational cultures and practices, it was not, is not and will not be realistic to expect that the magnitude of its potential (and desired) impact makes itself felt immediately in its fullness.

Based on this assumption, and beyond its specific and direct impact previously addressed, it is important to highlight that the implementation of the Social Network has already contributed, in some cases, to increase the capacity of focusing social intervention as being based not only on sharing problem solving, but also in the common definition of its shapes and

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causalities (that is, incorporating different viewpoints in the very definition of the problem).

If it is true that along with the ability to move from the 'mere' description of the problems for strategic consideration about their causal links, this is a benefit which is found still isolated and a long way off, it is also, without doubt, a process which is important to continue supporting, indeed from it, the possibility arises of redefining the place of social policies in regards other policies. Said otherwise, in the next stage of work, it is necessary to develop, whether from the standpoint of thought, whether from action, greater capacity for moving from descriptive diagnostics and from more traditional and sectorized operations to interpretive diagnostics and innovative responses which are derived from an integrated regard about reality and from an effective integration of partnerships. Deep down, there also resides there the possibility of their defining and stimulating effective local social development projects.

3. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC AXES	ACTION	OBJECTIVES
LEGAL FRAMEWORK	Creation of a new legal framework	<p>Regulating the Ministers Council Resolution, so as to clearly reflect the Programme's action principles, but also fitting into especially, recommendations expressed in terms of strategic axes, institutional 'Articulation¹ and 'Articulation with other planning tools'.</p> <p>To legally observe and encourage adhesion of private for profit bodies.</p> <p>Clarify the responsibility for implementation of Social Development Plan, differentiating and specifying skills.</p> <p>Clearly explain the role of Central Administration decentralized bodies in local partnerships (CLAS and CSF), in order to minimize the incorporation of tensions in the Programme which arise, specifically, from the difficulty of these bodies to be able to go to the meeting for the establishment of specific responses taking into account their functions and the de facto autonomy of the perpetrators.</p>
	Strengthen the weight/requirement of issuing opinions whose source is in the Social Network	<p>Extend to other Programmes and Measures the requirement of including opinions from the Social Network in the candidature process.</p> <p>Reinforce the weight of the opinions issued by the Social Network in the evaluation criteria and candidature approval</p>

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STRATEGIC AXES	ACTION	OBJECTIVES
<p>INSTITUTIONAL ARTICULATION</p>	<p>Integration of the Social Network Programme in an inter-ministerial structure</p>	<p>Frame in an inter-ministerial structure the Social Network Programme, in order to promote the integration and articulation of the social policies at the Central Government level</p>
	<p>Promotion of the Social Network as the forum of wider reflection and framing different local partnerships</p>	<p>Assume the Social Network as the 'hat' of the local base partnerships, being made up as the framed forum of reflection, of planning and of social intervention in municipalities.</p> <p>Given the particular skills and functions of some committees, councils, nucleus, etc, not being assumed the dilution of that technical autonomy and specificity, but rather, on one hand, to promote the increasing articulation and integration of local intervention and, on the other, minimizing the current overlay of local interventions.</p> <p>The promotion of the Social Network as the 'hat' of the different local partnerships should be clearly promoted and defined in such an inter-ministerial structure</p>

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STRATEGIC AXES	ACTION	OBJECTIVES
ARTICULATION WITH OTHER PLANNING TOOLS	Articulation with the National Plan of Action for Inclusion	<p>Discussion and definition of local, regional and central articulations, of the Local Network with the National and Regional Planning systems so that this planning tool might influence <i>ipso jure</i> national planning</p> <p>'Bi-univocal' movement between the PDS and the PNAI. On being informed by the local Social Development Plans, the PNAI would be able to contribute to structuring and mobilizing platforms of sub-regional or regional understanding, mirroring, at the level of definition of policies and lines of financing, the existing differentiated territorial patterns.</p> <p>The social networks in this sense would be able to then assume operationalization and embodiment tools of that plan.</p> <p>The implementation of these platforms of understanding, definition and articulation would render the constitution of intermediary structures unnecessary (structures of supra-municipality networks).</p> <p>If decentralized technical monitoring for district structures of the ISSS, to the central technical team of the Social Network would be able to be affected by the function of implementing information of the Social Development Plans (problems and necessities, intervention priorities, etc.) for PNAI.</p>
	Articulation with other local planning tools	Only the strengthening of articulation mechanisms between the Social Development Plans and other local planning tools (in particular the Municipal Director Plan) will allow the former might have truly been assumed as local socio-territorial management tools (namely at the level of planning of equipment and services coverage).

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STRATEGIC AXES	ACTION	OBJECTIVES
SUPPORT AND TECHNICAL MONITORING	Tiered devolution of support and technical accompaniment for ISS district structures	<p>Strengthen the support and technical monitoring capacity to the local social network teams. The devolution of this function will also allow streamlining of technical, material, logistical and financial resources necessary for the fulfilment of that function. Organization of a monitoring system and external reflective supervision with resources instantly (universities, firms, associations) of a local or regional basis.</p> <p>To ensure quality standards, this devolution will be made in a phased manner, ensuring the necessary training and qualification of technicians of the ISS district structures, in the Social Network principles and objectives, in the area of social development, territorial management, project management, participative methodologies of diagnostic and strategic planning, etc.</p> <p>For the sake of sustainability and process consolidation, it will be important to continue to ensure the monitoring local teams that have already finished the framed work phase in the area of the Action Programme for Social Network Implementation.</p>
	Re-orientation of functions and powers of the central technical team: deepening of conceptual and technical-methodological references	<p>On decentralizing the support and technical monitoring function for the ISS district structures, the central technical team will be able to make a greater investment in deepening the underlying theoretical problems and associated technical methodological questions, channelling this knowledge for production of more technical support documentation.</p> <p>The central technical team should ensure technical coordination and orientation of the district teams, ensuring maintenance of quality standards of work already carried out.</p> <p>Even if decentralizing that function of monitoring, the central team technicians should not 'lose ground connection', in the sense in which the theoretical methodological deepening mentioned above, should also have as references, experiences and the policies of local implementation.</p>

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STRATEGIC AXES	ACTION	OBJECTIVES
SUPPORT AND TECHNICAL MONITORING (cont.)	Strengthen trained supply	In the sense of increasingly qualifying social intervention, extending training opportunities to others/more local partnership technicians. Given the constraints associated with the dominant organizational culture, the promotion of specific training for leaders and locally elected would also be relevant.
	Creation of 'Information System' of available resources	Survey, systematization and dissemination of measures, programmes, lines of financing which the local teams will be able to apply for the execution of their Action Plans.
	Dissemination of good practices and their methodologies	Alongside the promotion of spaces and moments of joint reflection and sharing of experience (Inter-CLAS, Regional and National Meetings), focusing on continuous and systematic inventory and dissemination of 'good practices', eventually by way of the creation of a community practice. Support the dissemination of innovative responses and deepening dissemination of methodologies that enable them.
	- Creating monitoring system of execution of Action Plans	Supervision and monitoring execution of local Action Plans, for checking the difficulties and obstacles, introducing mechanisms and adjustment factors and correction required. Monitoring of 'mortality rates' (actual or announced) of Social Network projects and of 'morbidity rates' (indices of deficits of dynamics; absence, removal or harassment of core partners, etc.)

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STRENGTHENING NETWORK OPERATIONAL COMPONENTS	Support innovative projects	To technically and financially support integrated projects with innovative responses to detect social problems. To implement quality evaluation systems.
	Consolidation of action based on the accumulated experience and/or deepening in an intentionally controlled and selective way	To select, eventually, a limited set of Social Network implementation experiences which by their nature or by their quality, may be able to assume the character of pilot experiments. In these experiments, attention can be focussed on the clarification of the possibilities of strategic action in relation to the Municipalities with other social players and of articulation of tools of the Social Network (Social Diagnostic and Social Development Plan) with other Municipal Planning tools, in particular, with the Municipal Director Plan. "Inspiration" in management methodologies of experimental programmes may prove fruitful. The systematic animation of the strategic sense of the programme (sense of teachings to draw out from experience, etc), the quality of investigation exercises – action to promote and the nature of self-evaluation and evaluation methodologies to implement are illustrative of the kind of concern able to merit priority attention.

Credits

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