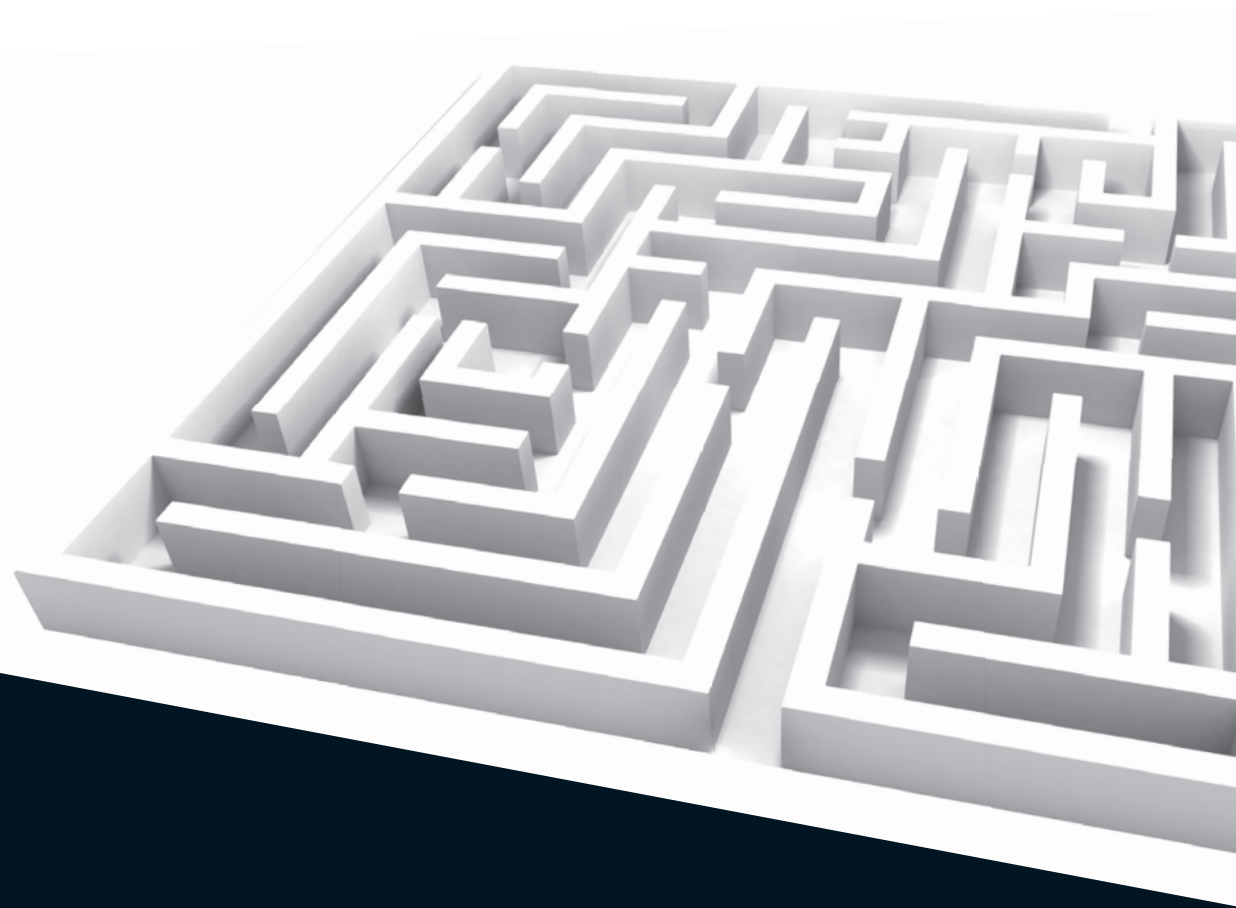




LABOR INSTITUTE GSEE

National Awareness Raising Actions on Social Inclusion and Social Protection



Christos Papatheodorou - Perikles Polizoides

Athens 2007



**National Awareness Raising Actions
on Social Inclusion and Social Protection**



LABOR INSTITUTE GSEE

**National Awareness Raising Actions
on Social Inclusion and Social Protection**

**Translation:
KEK GSEBEE**

**Christos Papatheodorou
Perikles Polizoides**

Athens 2007

Contents

I. Introduction	11
II. Methodology	13
III. Ex-ante assessment	16
IV. Public consultation and social protection in Greece	19
V. Indicator for Participation in Social Dialogue against Poverty: technical analysis	24
VI. Indicator for Participation in Social Dialogue against Poverty: pilot project	49
VII. Conclusions	88
Bibliography	94
Appendix	98

Christos Papatheodorou: *Associate Professor*

Perikles Polizoides: *Lecturer Department of Social Administration,
Democritus University of Thrace*

Preface

The terms “poverty” and “social exclusion” refer to composite and multidimensional phenomena. They define the processes and the conditions preventing citizens from having access to labour, income and education opportunities, as well as to other goods and rights.

In Greece, during the last few years, it is noticed that National Economy presents high rates of growth still not followed by a corresponding decrease of unemployment rates nor the rise of wages and pensions, while a rise of poverty rates and the aggravation of social inequalities are detected.

Latter available statistics show that 20% of greek households stand below poverty line (after social transfers) and more specifically: 25% of pensioners, 33% of unemployed, 41% of single parent families and 13% of workers (poor workers).

The upward trend noticed in the totality of poverty rates, combined with galloping expensiveness and the restricted efficiency of public authorities, reinforce the prevalence of neoliberal economic decisions mostly, resulting in the weakness of workers' purchasing power.

Meanwhile, there is no doubt that living conditions of immigrants in Greece, who face a high risk of poverty and penury, constitute a great challenge.

In this context, poverty and social exclusion take complex and multidimensional forms demanding a wide range of policies. Policies concerning employment, social protection, housing, education, health, information, mobility, security and justice, entertainment and culture sector.

Social protection and social inclusion are the conditions for achieving the goals of economic growth, employment and social justice.

In the framework of an active welfare state, it might be expedient to promote modern systems of social protection that will favour the access to full-time employment and combat the poverty effect.

Our country's social protection system will respond positively to the challenges of poverty and exclusion provided that high growth rates are ensured and diffused in the society, the goals of social policy are redefined, finance of social protection system is raised, all necessary reforms in administrative machinery occur, ensuring more effective actions and national coordination among all social security institutions.

The key objectives in the effort to fight against poverty and social exclusion are:

- Promote the entry in full-time employment
- Universal access to resources, rights, goods and services
- Prevent the risks of social and economic exclusion
- Action for socially vulnerable groups
- Mobilisation of all stakeholders

As far as the latter objective is concerned, it is imperative to launch and promote social dialogue among all parties concerned, both public and private, with a wider involvement of social partners, NGOs and social service organisations.

Social dialogue for fighting poverty and exclusion in our country is extremely feeble and practically ineffective.

The lack of social dialogue culture and of philosophy of participatory decision – making is a general problem also affecting any process that supports social protection and therefore the welfare state.

The awakening and systematic mobilisation of actors for strengthening social dialogue and assuring the means for intensifying cooperation initiatives as well as developing public consultation at a national, regional and local level, has been the main purpose of the programme "National Awareness Raising Actions on Social Inclusion and Social Protection", in which participated the Institute of Labour of Greek General Confederation of Labour (INE-GSEE) in cooperation with the Vocational Training Centre of GSEVEE, the Greek Antipoverty Network, the Greek Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED), the Hellenic

Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), the Centre for Family and Childcare and the NGO “European Prospect”.

This study is a constituent part of the above-mentioned programme and its object is both to plan a methodology and configure a measurement indicator of participation in social antipoverty dialogue.

Within the study’s framework, there was an attempt to examine and outline the actual state and level of social dialogue on poverty and exclusion, as well as to identify its defaults but also any possible chances to improve it.

In particular, emerge all parameters promoting and strengthening social dialogue and consultation on fight against poverty and exclusion, through a research approach of all involved institutions.

We consider that the resulting conclusions of this project can contribute to the promotion and development of an effective social dialogue for the fight against poverty, along with a meaningful and sincere cooperation of all institutions concerned (public, social and private).

Beyond all doubt, political will remains essential in order to decrease social inequalities and fight poverty.

The President of the Institute of Labour
of Greek General Confederation
of Labour (INE-GSEE)

Giannis Panagopoulos

1. Introduction

This study is a component part of the initiative National Awareness Raising Actions on Social Inclusion and Social Protection. The aim of this research approach is the compilation of an Indicator for participation in social dialogue against poverty, IPSDP, (hereinafter “Indicator”). In this context, it was attempted to investigate and determine, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, the current procedure and the level of social dialogue on poverty and social exclusion. At the same time, there was an attempt to identify the weaknesses present in this dialogue but also the potential opportunities for its improvement.

The aim was to develop a functional indicator of both theoretical value and practical application. That is, an indicator that could be used to record not only the current situation (this could be easily done with the rule of thumb alone, without using any indicators) but also to record and assess future data, either periodically or one-off. This timeless dimension was the focus of the analysis throughout the research activity, as it constitutes the critical factor for its future success or failure. The endeavor will be successful if the indicator achieves to record clearly and reliably the progress or regression of the social dialogue on poverty in Greece. This endeavor is extremely challenging. The parameters affecting complex phenomena such as poverty and social dialogue are many and it would be over-optimistic to think that developments are predictable or that there can be today an accurate projection of a future situation. Naturally, such an indicator could not depict the participation in social dialogue with a simple numerical value, on the basis of which one could perform rankings, assessments and comparisons. This would entail risky simplifications and wide arbitrariness as regards ranking and assignment of numerical and weighted values in the individual components and aspects of social dialogue; something that would render the indicator arbitrary, lacking theoretical value and unsuitable for practical application.

As long as the indicator proves reliable in time, then, at the same time, it could serve not only as just a recording and comparison means but more im-

portantly as an innovative awareness tool, capable of providing the detailed material for the study of problems and the search for possible solutions, always towards the development of a healthy and effective public consultation aiming at fighting poverty and elimination of its adverse effects. Moreover, in technical terms, the indicator was designed in such way so as to serve as a basis for the following stages of the program National Awareness Raising Actions on Social Inclusion and Social Protection, namely the organization of seminars for the delivery of the results to the major agents of social dialogue in Greece, and specialized courses for high-rank officials of organizations involved in the issues in question.

Evidently, in a country such as Greece, with no historical background of public consultancy in any area, the endeavor is both original and challenging. However, current circumstances are favourable as the plurality of agents endorsing the initiative, namely the Labor Institute of the General Confederation of Greek Workers, the Centre for Vocational Training of the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants, the Hellenic Network Against Poverty, the Greek Manpower Employment Organization, the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, the Centre for Child and Family Support and the European Perspective Development and Training Centre constitute, *mutatis mutandis*, the perfect starting point for the long-term struggle that lies ahead.

II. Methodology

With poverty being a phenomenon on the rise, not only in developing areas of the planet but even at the centre of modern western cities, the relevant literature, albeit relatively wide, does not suffice for the understanding and effective action against these phenomena. The international literature on social dialogue and poverty is limited, and the same holds for the literature on social dialogue and public consultation in other social fields such as health or toxic substance addiction. At this level there have been at times useful publications of practical consultation guides. However, these guides are mainly published by public agencies (governmental agencies, Local Administration Organisations) wishing to encourage consultation, hence they are not practicable in the scope of our approach.

At this point it should be noted that the research team tried to focus on the specific goal, being the compilation of the indicator, and avoided any further reference to the analysis of the poverty phenomenon as such which, despite presenting a profound research interest, is beyond the scope of this endeavor. The team also avoided any general reference to the theory of indicators as the question was not whether such an indicator can be compiled but what this indicator should be. Nevertheless, practical and important issues in the theory of indicators, mainly concerning the relative weight of the individual parameters and the problems it entails in making comparisons over time, are not taken into account in the analysis. Therefore, due to the absence of a suitable model, the research approach started from zero. A three-pillar theoretical analysis framework was established as follows:

Potential agents of social dialogue- social consultation on poverty	Potential processes for social dialogue-social consultation on poverty	Potential recommendations/recipients/ executive agents against poverty and its effects
---	--	--

Then the endeavor focused on identifying specific agents for each of the aforementioned pillars. At this level the knowledge and expertise of agents

that primarily deal with poverty had to be utilized. The rationale was that these agents could in turn suggest other persons and agents so as, in the end, to involve as many parties as possible in an avalanche form. The agents that were initially selected were the endorsing parties to this initiative as well as 16 agents of the National Committee of Social Protection of L. 3144/2003 "Social dialogue for the promotion of employment and social protection and other provisions" (Gazette A´ 111/8.5.2003) who undertook the promotion of social dialogue and the combat against poverty and social exclusion, the development of a network for social protection and social integration and the consultation on the planning, monitoring and assessment of the national action plan for social integration. Namely: the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Economics and Finance, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralization, The Ministry of Development, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), the Central Association of Greek Municipalities and Communities (KEDKE), the Association of Prefecture Administrations (ENAE), the Greek Church, the National Confederation of Disabled Persons (ESAEA), the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV), the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants (GSEVEE), the Greek Confederation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations (PASEGES), and the National Confederation of Greek Trade (ESEE).

These agents, like any new interviewed agent that emerged in the aforementioned process, were approached mainly through person-to-person interview supplemented by a questionnaire. Additionally, due to the original and complex nature of the endeavor, the interviews were conducted with the support of research assistants but only two experienced researchers who tried to encourage dialogue and record ideas, suggestions and opinions in the context of a more open discussion. It was deemed necessary not to deploy extra researchers, in order to ensure a relatively even data collection and recording. The questionnaire comprises 24 questions, most of which closed-type, and it was designed in such way so that filling-in, under normal circumstances, should not exceed ten minutes. The questionnaire was finalized after a series

of trial interviews. Questions 2 to 6 attempt to record the representation range of each agent. The rationale here was that the more people are represented and the more population-social groups they come from, the healthier the dialogue basis. Questions 7 to 10 attempt to substantiate the involvement of each agent in the issues of poverty. The rationale here was that there are agents with wide representation but limited relation with poverty; other agents with small representation but an expertise on poverty issues and all cases in-between. Questions 11 to 14 justify the above substantiation with specific arguments. Questions 15 to 22 attempt to record the engagement of the interviewed agent in terms of the second pillar, that is, its involvement in public dialogue and public consultation processes on poverty. Finally, questions 23 and 24 were designed aiming at encouraging reflection on which parameters possibly affect the quantity and quality of the dialogue on poverty, and at facilitating the recording of knowledge and expertise of the agents on the issue as well as at generating ideas. To the effect of forwarding the questionnaire to the agents, in order for them to be prepared for the interviews, any available, case-specific means were utilized, namely standard post, electronic mail and fax. As expected, due to the original nature of the endeavor, the limited time available and the season, the response was rather limited¹.

1. Among the agents who did not respond, despite continuous reminders, was SEV. Hence, it was not possible to record the views of one of the major representatives of the productive agents in our country.

III. Ex-ante assessment

1. The use of a brief questionnaire for the recording of a complex phenomenon cannot cover all possible dimensions of the problem. On the other hand though, we know that in practice it is rather difficult to keep the interviewees long: it was deemed that ten minutes of the main interview or 4 pages (2 sheets) of the questionnaire should not be exceeded. The number of properly completed questionnaires is negatively correlated with their size.
2. The use of a single questionnaire for data recording from a multitude of diverse agents, each of whom has a different structure, mission, organization and operation system may create problems in understanding the questions. Indeed, several agents complained, even at the stage of trial fill-ins, about the irrelevance of many questions in their case. However, the use of more than one, agent-specific questionnaires, entails two major problems regarding the objectives of this research: first, the even and comparable recording of data is hindered and second there is the risk of bias and answer manipulation since the questions would be worded differently or some would be totally eliminated from the beginning. For these reasons there was an effort to overcome these problems with the presence of interviewers during the fill-in of the questionnaires.
3. In their majority, the interviewed agents do not have an organized mechanism or statutory processes for responding to requests regarding questionnaire fill-in and supply of information in general. Despite the effort to approach the most suitable individual in each case, the coincidence of opinion between the agent and the specific individual cannot be guaranteed. The heads of agents and organisations are not easily accessible (or available) for such matters, which is reasonable. The attempt to refer the fill-in to statutory administrative bodies such as a General Assembly or a meeting of the Board of Directors, albeit possibly fruitful, would lead to significant delays.

4. The 5th question (“if you have members, what percentage of them belong to the following categories?”) of the questionnaire aims at gathering information for the classification of agents members into various categories (age, education, professional status etc). The rationale here is that the more groups are represented, the healthier and more effective the social dialogue is. On the one hand, one could argue that the suggested classification is not sufficient. On the other hand, though, the agents lack suitable information hence a more detailed classification would not be functional. The categories set forth constitute a compromising (and certainly not the only proper) suggestion. Besides, the ideal solution would ask for multiple classifications in a grid form, that is, a combination of all sub-categories, which is unfeasible given the present circumstances.
5. Sub-questions d’ and e’ of the 6th question (“Are there any political parties present?- do your members come from the entire political spectrum?”) bear *de facto* a political charge. These questions, though, were considered important, on the basis of the rationale that the wide political representation constitutes a healthy characteristic of social dialogue and public consultation and under the right circumstances may lead to consensual solutions of wide acceptance.
6. The 7th question (“how is the involvement of the agent in poverty issues substantiated/ legitimated”) and the 8th question (“is action against poverty a main priority of your agent?”) may be treated prejudicially by agents, thinking that insufficient substantiation would exclude them from recording. In reality, there is no such intention (and this was made clear by the interviewers during the questionnaire fill-in). These questions were included in order to record the number of those actively involved in the action against poverty (and if this number is low, to have this scientifically documented in the questionnaires). On the other hand, the potential and opinion of agents who are not directly involved in the issue of poverty, but could potentially be, still constitute significant parameters in this analysis. As aforesaid, this study is not limited to the recording of the present situation, but was rather designed so as to serve as a reference for future approaches.

7. In the 19th question (“what poverty-related events did you organize in the past 24 months”), the suggested period entails a certain degree of arbitrariness (it could be longer or shorter). Again, it is a compromising suggestion that was preferred over an open statement with no time limit (that could include events held years ago and their impact has worn out) or a general statement (“reasonable time period”), which may take on various interpretations.
8. The 23rd question (“to what extent do you consider the following factors significant in the establishment of social dialogue and public consultation on poverty in Greece”) is quite extensive. At the same time, the requested ranking from little to much, on a scale from 1 to 5, is subjective and does not necessarily lead to comparable results. The objective of the question, however, is not limited to the rank order determination. The 27 suggested fields are in fact a first approach of the basic parameters of the indicator under compilation. The research team thought that it would be a wrong practice to give the impression at this stage that the indicator is granted. In addition to the sought indirect assessment, the question serves as an introduction to the last 24th question (“what other actions could facilitate and/ or enhance social dialogue on poverty?”), the proper and comprehensive answer to which from all agents involved is determining for the compilation of a reliable indicator.

The engagement in issues related to the combat against poverty and its effects is by definition a particularly politically charged issue. The heads of the project instructed the scientific team to handle the research in a fully scientific, objective, unbiased and unrestricted way. Every possible effort was made (within the existing time limits) to approach as many agents as possible from all social sectors and to record their views in accordance with the aforementioned conditions, openly and freely. In this context the Indicator is intended to serve as distinctly technical tool, scientifically documented, which if used properly and with possible good-faith future modifications and adjustments could make a substantial contribution to the development of public consultation and social dialogue on poverty in Greece.

IV. Public consultation and social protection in Greece

There is practically no tradition of public consultation on poverty issues, and any other social policy issue in Greece for that matter. The social protection system in our country was established under different circumstances and followed a different route both compared to other European countries and countries of the geographically and structurally nearby southeastern area (which for many researchers constitute a special social protection model). Among other substantial differences, the failure of different social strata to cooperate on the basis of social dialogue and public consultation towards the achievement of consensual solutions is significant. The Greek social state, throughout its history but mainly in its more organized form after World War II, was characterized by the fragmentation of social conflicts with the intermediate and final goal access to the state. The class struggle took on a political party form; the parties had a leading role in the civil society; an ever-lasting contradictory clash relationship but also one of mutual support between the state and the society was developed; the civil society failed to set up its own system of values and rules and the effort to limit opaque mechanisms for the replenishment of resources was hindered by organized interests of various social groups (Petmesidou 2003).

Despite the large amounts allocated at times, any measures were implemented ineffectively, without considering public opinion, interested parties and other wider or specific social groups and without ever developing a specific and long-term strategy. Lacking the necessary wider social consensus and the support of wider social forces, the changes attempted at times were rather small-scaled and failed to bring on a comprehensive upgrade of social policy. Hence it remained fragmented and imbalanced, mainly characterized by the polarization of the income replenishment system and the gaps in social protection which appeared over-generous to certain privileged groups participating in the production process (through permanent and formal employment)

to the expense of all the other groups. In addition to this, there are major and unjustified variations even in the provisions to similar socioeconomic groups, given that the gradual development of the system was mainly the deficient implementation of pre-election proclamations and the respective furtherance of partisan and sectional interests.

So far, there has been no significant step towards the development of a statutory national scale personal social services system combining both prevention and substantial intervention during crises. At the administrative level, there is a lack of a comprehensive policy regarding the planning, funding, execution, monitoring, control and evaluation of individual projects. The system is particularly centralized and there was never an adequate state mechanism that would serve as a link among the local level, the social care institutions of second and third degree, the regional health and care systems, the NGOs and other agents.

Much more so, there were never any state initiatives encouraging social dialogue and public consultation and major or trivial decisions are still taken behind closed doors. In the context of this communication lack and refusal to delegate authority, social care in Greece was limited to the provision of sub-standard services towards the more vulnerable members of the population and it never managed either to identify the needs of all population groups or to develop a proactive nature but rather it was limited to the reactive management of needs during crises. There was never a state administrative independence capable of rebuffing the pressures of certain privileged population groups (often depicted in the partisan pressures of sovereign parties) and enforcing the development and comprehensiveness of services. As a result, the family was the historic counterbalance of this weakness, bearing the most of the social care provision responsibility cost.

In this context, the lack of a solid civil society is a structural characteristic of the Greek society. "Volunteerism was barely developed in Greece. The majority of volunteer organizations were formed by political parties after 1974. Being largely influenced by social factors, they are very limitedly involved in social actions." (Rombolis et al 1995: 10). Volunteer organisations were active in

managing local problems otherwise neglected by government policy: In many regions, volunteer organisations were formed in order to exert pressure on the state for the satisfaction of their members' demands. The state responded with the adoption of tax relieves and the satisfaction of other, smaller scale demands. In this sense, the role of the volunteer organisations was limited to letter publications and organisations of annual meetings. The popular base volunteer organizations, similar to other extra-state and extra-party agents, did not develop any initiatives in the field of social policy (Petmesidou 1991: 39). This characteristic is related with the powerless civil society, the full integration of social and class conflicts in partisan disputes and the high degree of political and administrative centralization. Albeit the occasional success of various social groups in gaining access to power and state governance, there was never an established sovereign class. Petmezidou illustrates: The establishment of the urban-democratic state in 19th century Greece, whereby the prevailing conditions were pre-capitalistic while at the same time there was a lack of an economically strong traditional ruling class, led to the development of relationship between the state mechanism and the civil society different in nature from that of the developed capitalistic societies. The political power does not derive from the economic power of the ruling social classes but rather the opposite (Petmezidou 1987:185-6).

The relationship of each sovereign social class with the state was insecure, the state mechanism failed to adjust properly to the standards of modern capitalism resulting to the development of a strong dependence relationship of the civil society on the state: The civil society failed to develop independent rules and values away from politics and the state, while the nature of the frequent clashes over economic issues was exceptionally political: In Greece, the intense involvement of the party politics in the civil society limits the potentiality of implementing wide structural reforms that would facilitate a more flexible response to social demands through the collaboration of the volunteer and state sectors. The acknowledgement of this necessity is a low priority in the opinions of the commercial unions, the professional associations and the political parties. (Petmesidou 1991: 45) Contrary to developed European countries, social policy in Greece, to the extent and degree it was exercised, did not

offer any substantial contribution to social development, hence issues such as diminishing inequalities through the development of re-allocating strategies and policies, the promotion of integral values through the consolidation of social justice and solidarity, the strengthening of democratic institutions and the establishment of an effective social protection system, with a balanced harmonization of social needs and economic resources remained in the margin of political, social and economical lags. (Venieris 2004: 41).

One should note though, certain individual efforts of public consultation that were recently made in our country in the field of social protection. These are the processes developed in the context of National Action Plan for Employment and the National Action Plan for Social Integration. They were supported with documented proposals by several of the agents endorsing the initiative that includes this study. However, the effectiveness, the representativeness (of participating agents and institutions) as well as the organization of this consultation has come in for serious criticism, even from the participants themselves. A severe criticism would characterize these processes as merely an effort to create the necessary legalizing framework of the National Action Plans. More tolerantly, one could see them as unprecedented processes set without any past experience in similar issues in the country, wherefrom one can gain useful insight on the planning and implementation of similar processes in the future.

The reform of the social state constitutes the necessary prerequisite for the promotion of a more open and fair society and at the same time for the facilitation of the transition to the postindustrial economy. The future success of the adjustment of the welfare state to the new standards depends on the establishment of a wide consultation alliance unifying those who are marginalized or treated unfairly in the current system and realize the need for its substitution while it is also connected with the clarification of the transition terms so as to ensure the wide consent of the public opinion (Matsagganis 2004). In a society of constant change where the developed policies should meet the changing needs, be effective and flexible and enjoy the maximum possible social consent, the promotion of social dialogue is imperative. Partners and

discussing parties in the process of social dialogue are all those involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies but mainly all the recipients of the same.

V. Indicator for Participation in Social Dialogue against Poverty: technical analysis

In order to facilitate the understanding of the Indicator compilation process, the social dialogue and public consultation against poverty are divided into three levels, as follows:

1st level: participants

(who wishes/ is able/ is entitled/ should participate in the dialogue?)

2nd level: procedures

(how is the dialogue/ consultation established and what are the following processes?)

3rd level: decisions

(who receives the dialogue/consultation messages and how do they utilize them?)

This three-level division is mainly of technical nature and not strict, as the limits among the levels are often indiscernible. We should note in advance that the mere reference of individual parameters is of analysis value only and cannot lead in itself to a comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenon under examination. As regards the social dialogue and public consultation on poverty, reality could be adequately approached only through the interdependence of individual factors and the recording of the constantly changing correlation among the same. We should also point out that there cannot be a general definition of "good" social dialogue": the social dialogue involves individual characteristics that may be neutral, parallel or even conflicting. For instance, and as we will see later in detail:

- an "effective" public dialogue may entail the exclusion of certain voices for simplification and speed reasons.

- a “desirable” or “healthy” public dialogue may be defined (interpreted) differently from various interest groups.
- a fully “representative” dialogue may turn out rigid and thus ineffective.
- A “flexible” dialogue may perhaps deal better with a current situation, but it may also be used as an exploitation means on the part of the strongest negotiator (e.g. the more privileged pressure or interest social groups).
- a rigidly structured dialogue with statutory processes is probably fairer but also slower and time-consuming.

The above discrepancies are taken into account later, where all the individual elements of the indicator are examined one by one. Namely these are:

1. the percentage of the population represented
2. the number of social dialogue and public consultation agents
3. the number and distribution of the origin of individuals represented by each agent
4. the management method of each agent and the authorization of representatives for participating in the dialogue
5. the agent’s independence
6. the legalization of the agent’s involvement in poverty issues
7. the priority assigned by each agent to poverty issues
8. the specific specialization in poverty issues
9. the documented knowledge on poverty and the acceptance of a common definition
10. the stipulation of statutory commitments against poverty in an international, European and national level
11. the support of education and research on poverty

12. the networking of each agent and their experience in social dialogue and public consultation issues
13. the experience of each agent in influencing the development of social policy
14. the establishment of a poverty observatory
15. the participation, the number and the coordination of the agents-recipients of messages and decision-making

Element 1: the percentage of the population represented

Generally it can be claimed that one prerequisite for social dialogue and public consultation is the wide representation of the population. This parameter should be examined in conjunction with the political system. Public consultation neither can, nor should substitute parliamentary procedures but rather thrives along with them. The democratic regime, albeit its weaknesses, is always the most appropriate means for making and legalizing collective social decisions. On the other hand, politics at this level is mainly an interest balancing mechanism. It is evident that in this context the interests of the poorer are not sufficiently represented and this is where the concept of a healthy civil society comes into play. The right of free expression is an integral part of direct democracy and on this basis everyone who publicly voices their views does not have to be either elected or to act on any statutes. Direct democracy fits best with the operation form of non governmental organizations. On the other hand, accountability stemming from a statutory document is the cornerstone of parliamentary democracy, which requires formal processes and, above all, elections in order to ensure a fair and representative decision-making system. Parliamentary democracy is the natural habitat of governments. Both routes are useful provided we want policies expressing the public interest: In the absence of a consistent public pressure, governments would impudently go back on their pre-election commitments. At the same time, in the absence of elections it is impossible to include the different interests and issues set forth by the Civil Society. In addition to the political and partisan competition for power and the satisfaction of demands/ interests, public consultation can promote issues and lead to socially desirable solutions of wide consent.

In this sense, the importance lies not only on the participation of a large number of citizens, but also on the satisfactory representation of various social groups. In these, one should take into account parameters such as gender, age, income, professional status, education, geographic distribution, etc. In conjunction with the above, one should also consider the representation of groups such as the disabled, the refugees, the immigrants and any other social vulnerable group. An additional problem emerging is that while a large part of the population possibly remains excluded from any form of public consultation, another smaller part secures wider representation than its proportional one. To illustrate, the same individual may voice an opinion via collective agent bodies, as a woman, as a multi-children parent and as a farmer. One should also consider the opinion of the poor themselves which will be examined separately. It is evident that the proportional representation of all the above is both ineffective and unfeasible. Such a case would mean holding full participation referendums on a national scale with all the weaknesses this would entail (i.e. setting the agenda, covering the costs, etc). In practical terms, these problems are transferred to another level, through the shift of the social dialogue and public consultation weight in agent's level.

A point we should stress further when referring to public consultation is that one should not overlook the fact that lobbying (internationally) gains increasing importance in modern democratic regimes. From an informal marginal process it upgrades to a central political power of substantial meaning and quite often of institutional nature. Public consultation on poverty cannot afford to let this field unexploited. In Greece, the pressure of organized interest groups may yield maximum possible results when exercised on elected representatives and mainly:

- a. in a parliamentary level (MPs) and in the European Parliament
- b. in Local Administration Organisations of first and second degree (Prefects, Mayors, Prefectural and Municipal Members)

The steps that enhance social dialogue and public consultation towards this direction are first the identification of individual decision-making bodies (Parliament Committees, issue-specific municipal committees etc) and second

the institution of public consultation processes for each one of these bodies. The critical point regarding these processes is the commitment to adopt and implement the consultation proposals on the strict condition that this commitment does not infringe the principle of democratic representation and function. The establishment of one or more agent (public, private and civil society) participation registries, albeit extremely difficult, might make a particularly positive contribution.

It should be seriously considered though that population groups not in favour of reallocational policies or/ and more particularly specific policies against poverty (in the population as a whole or in individual population groups) may have a stronger influence power and expression of their interests on the decision-making bodies through lobbying (in a national or local level) than other larger population groups in society.

Element 2: the number of social dialogue and public consultation agents

Generally, it can be said that social dialogue and public consultation are favoured by the mobilization of a large number of agents, provided that they meet certain conditions that will be examined later on. Although no agent can be excluded *a priori* from the dialogue, the number of participating agents should not be that large so as to render the processes bureaucratic, rigid or ineffective. The ideal number, however, is not predetermined. The idea should be that the more the experience increases and the public consultation processes on poverty are improved, the more the number of agents can be raised, without having any negative impact on the dialogue effectiveness. The participating agents in social dialogue and public consultation on poverty may be:

- public agents (government services, public services, local administration organizations, research organizations, etc)
- civil society organizations (trade union bodies, NGOs, associations, self-assistance groups, federations and confederations, church organizations etc)

The above agents may participate in social dialogue and public consultation on poverty in three different capacities:

- as agents of problem-identification, expressing demands and claiming solutions (who may be distinguished between agents expressing demands of their members and agents in advocacy of third parties)
- as arbitration or unbiased scientific support agents
- as agents of authority, decision-making and solution implementation

It should be noted that in practice the limits between the above categories are not discernable, clear and fixed and that many agents may participate in the processes of social dialogue and public consultation on poverty in two or even all three of the above capacities.

Element 3: the number and origin distribution of the individuals represented by each agent

Provided certain conditions that will be discussed later are met, the greater the number of people represented by each agent, the more people are represented in the dialogue overall; something that (given the reservations mentioned in element 1 above) is positive for the social dialogue and public consultation. The wide and proportional social distribution of the origin of the individuals secures two basic conditions that are useful for public consultation:

- the dialogue pluralism through the expression of many different opinions and the introduction of ideas for further development.
- the consent and wide acceptance of the measures proposed at any given time.

Here it should be added, however, that the range of social representation of any particular agent is not a measurable magnitude. Much more so, the comparison and classification of agents in terms of this parameter is not possible there being certain restrictions:

First, the agents that keep data on the social characteristics of their members are very few. Additionally, these data are constantly changing, so a systematic recording is required.

Second, major agents that could contribute to the dialogue (indicatively

without assessment: The National Statistics Service (ESYE), the Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI), various Higher Education Institutions (AEI) operate on a different basis and do not have members.

Third, the concept of representation is totally different for a Local Administration Organisation compared with a self-help association.

Fourth, the degree of involvement of various members is totally different in each case. (For example, many NGOs have obligation-free registered members, members-subscribers with different contribution levels and members offering voluntary work of different frequency or difficulty in each case. Thus, even if there are detailed data, how could it be possible to record and assess the representation of various social groups under these conditions?).

Fifth, the multitude of various social groups, classified on the basis of criteria combinations, is vast and it is unrealistic to claim that each one could be represented.

In any case though, *mutatis mutandis* and in keeping with the aforesaid, basic dimensions such as gender, age, occupation, education and place of residence could be taken into account as long as there are available data. Reversing the above rationale, we see that the fact that many agents represent by nature certain interests (workers, pensioners, unemployed, women or other) is not adverse to the social dialogue, to the extent that overall the participating agents represent every group and naturally the (often) conflicting views and interests.

Element 4: the management method of each agent and the authorization of representatives for participating in the dialogue

The great number and the wide distribution of the origin of the individuals an agent possibly represents cannot offer to the public dialogue if communication between the management and the base is not developed smoothly. A determining factor for this communication is the election method of the administration bodies. This election is naturally an internal affair of the agents. In most cases where there are members, the administration bodies emerge following a general vote or a vote by proxy. The candidates are often supported

by specific political parties. The representation of all political or partisan orientations in the election candidates of the participating agents, the presence of opposition and the institution of democratic management procedures constitute a positive dialogue element. The political-partisan disputes within the agents may be more productive in a gentle climate. However, in certain cases, even conflict is desirable as long as it can bring about new balances.

Therewith, the decision regarding the person/persons who will participate in the social dialogue on behalf of the agent is of high importance. The first issue arising is whether the selected person will be the head of management or another individual. In the latter case, the formal authorization procedures should be carefully considered. In addition, the selected person should definitely enjoy the trust of both the management and the base. Another issue for discussion is the extent of the authorization. What are the limits within which the representative has the discretion to negotiate? To what extent can he bind the agent he represents with his opinions or signature? The time limit of the authorized representative's engagement is also under question. Public consultation is a long process; this means that there should be a provision of a long-term trust in the selected person, probably with a prospect exceeding the election term. Also, the mere participation in the procedures offers the participants significant experience and is in itself a high-level learning process. In this respect, each agent makes a significant investment on the person selected to represent them. This advantage has specific limits, though. Extreme trust in a person will sooner or later create problems if this person turns over-centralized or indispensable. Finally, another decision to be made is how many people will make up the representation team. The greatest the number, the more skills and knowledge can be utilized and the more experience will be gained. On the other hand though, the chances of poor communication or discord within the team are equally raised hence trust to the same is lowered, as does its prestige and negotiating ability.

Element 5: the agent's independence

The independence degree of any agent significantly affects the process and the way they present problems, put forward demands and claim solutions. In-

dependence has many dimensions, most important of which are the administrative and financial. There are many agents whose administrative bodies are not elected by the base but are rather appointed following other procedures. For example, in many cases statutes provide for the President's office the appointment of a person elected in another office (e.g. Mayor), a distinguished personality (e.g. University professor), the local Metropolitane and other. In many cases, but not always, these offices are occupied by persons who are simply trusted by the current government (often lacking the necessary qualifications), hence leading to hydrocephalism (and also ineffectiveness) of the central authority. These agents cannot be excluded from the dialogue; however, this parameter should be taken into account.

Respectively, the same is true for the financial independence of the agents participating in the dialogue. Although financial independence is not always a prerequisite for raising one's voice when necessary, we may nevertheless assume that it is highly facilitating to that effect. In our case, the state and the government is usually the agent controlling funding and may possibly distort true will in this way. This of course does not mean that any agent funded with public resources has no place in the dialogue- besides even purely state agents are bound to participate. In order though to assess the role of each agent in its true dimension, we should consider:

- the level of state funding
- the frequency of funding and its regular or special nature
- the correlation degree between funding and imposing of control and manipulation procedures

Element 5: the agent's accountability and transparency

Relevant to the appointment method of administration bodies and the agent's independence are the concepts of accountability and transparency. Accountability, as an accounting process to a supervising body or much more to society as a whole, is by no means considered an independence violation. Also, accountability and transparency are not limited to prudent financial

management, but extend to strategic decision-making, agenda formulation procedures, personnel selection procedures, internal organisation and generally to any other dimension of the operation of an organisation. Accountability and transparency are related both with the outward image of the agent and the image of the agent to their individual members. Specifically:

- strengthen the trust of the members in the management and facilitate the approval of its actions.
- gain acceptance and respect among the participants-agents in a social dialogue level
- enhance the public image of the agent to society as a whole

The emergence in recent years of a multitude of non-governmental organizations that operate in the social field and handle significant resources has led to a particular increased demand from society for accountability. This accountability can be secured, apart from true observance to minimum procedures provided in law, with the utilization of the services of independent auditing agents, the institution of quality management systems and the introduction of similar methods in the business world. Modern technologies, such as the internet, offer additional accountability and transparency possibilities to the agents who wish so.

Element 6: the legalization of the agent's involvement in poverty issues

Nonwithstanding the desirability of a large number of agents for the development of public consultation against poverty and its effects, a significant parameter to be considered is whether and to what extent each agent's participation is legitimate. This legalization has an internal and an external dimension. The former refers to how and to what extent the involvement of the agent in poverty issues is substantiated. For instance, this involvement may be provisioned in the by-laws or be a decision of an authorized body such as a general assembly, a board of directors, etc. It may also arise from some statutory body against poverty. All the above can be recorded relatively easily.

Matters are much more complicated as regards the external legalization. Here, we refer to whether an agent is entitled to deal with poverty issues, pos-

sibly on behalf of the poor themselves. Obviously, in these cases good intentions, even if taken for granted, do not suffice. The legalization issue relates to challenging the intervention right as long as this does not self-arise from the total or at least the representative participation of the interested parties themselves, namely the poor. An additional issue arising and complicated matters further is the extent to which those who pay, that is, the tax payers are by definition an "interested party". Also, contrary to accountability, legalization can not be measured numerically nor can it be characterized in one word as present or absent and there are few cases that would definitely fall under the one or the other term. A minimum prerequisite for legalization is legitimacy; however, the two terms do not coincide. Legalization is related to moral characteristics and ideals such as equality, dignity, impartiality, justice, respect for freedom, truthfulness, work offer, good will, personal commitment and collective responsibility. There is though an obvious and measurable legalization element, this being the direct support the agent enjoys from the poor themselves, its members and, in the case for example of charities, the supporters and donors.

The consent of the poor themselves is the key legalization parameter but it is a magnitude rather difficult, if not unfeasible, to define in absolute terms. In the first place, one can never know to what extent non-protest constitutes consent, although these two should never be confused under any circumstances. Also, the actual number of a target group, its respective percentage agreeing to any intervention and the extent to which it agrees are unknown magnitude which in fact absolutely depend, hence can be potentially manipulated, on the definitions used each time (this issue is mentioned elsewhere herein). In another point there is also reference to the issue of commitments stipulation on how to combat poverty in international conventions, the Constitution, legislation and other "new type" documents such as moral and ethical codes, charts and likewise. The proven commitment to these documents and the true observation of the limits they set may be a significant source of legalization.

An even less tangible, but equally important, as the case may be, legalization element is the good will of an agent after a long-term, consistent and suc-

cessful engagement with the issue of poverty. Good will is earned through a combination of wide social representation, excellent quality communication among the various management levels and the base, as well as the presence of accountability and transparency mechanisms, quality assurance systems and open communication channels with the target-group and the other public and private agents. The good will of an agent, though, is always a subjective, non-measurable and perhaps risky assessment factor. After a certain point, there is often an abuse of the agent's good will emanating from the excessive networking with other agents and the media. There are examples of NGOs heads who express an opinion on every social issue, which they or the agents they represent have little to do with. Similar extreme or mistaken estimations may arise from high recognisability of certain agents. High recognisability combined with a positive attitude from public opinion is desirable, but in this case there cannot be an objective measurement nor can there be comparisons, for example, of a combination of 60% recognisability and 40% positive attitude on the one hand with 5% recognisability and 70% positive attitude on the other. Besides, "positive attitude" may take in practice many gradings. A safer legalization practice is the post-assessment of the agents' activity both from society as a whole and the target group itself. In fact, in this case both the achievements and the attainment method can be assessed. However, the seriousness of the poverty combat issue and perhaps its urgent nature do not allow for such experimentations.

Specifically, the criticism against the legalization of NGOs, such as charities, interventions is the reflection of a wider discussion on the tolerable, desirable or ideal democracy forms. This criticism takes on a different perspective as regards the opinion right and another as regards the action right. Like any individual, every legitimate organization has the right to express opinions. Even if the NGOs networks do not always function on the basis of democratic accountability and governance systems, the rising voice of the civil society adds a significant control and balancing level to the current system and may act as an additional communication channel for the socially excluded from the right to express oneself. The question, therefore, is not the abolishment of this channel, but rather finding solutions so as to balance interventions with a fair

and representative manner thus contributing to the eradication and not the aggravation of current social, financial and political inequalities.

Element 7: the priority assigned by each agent to poverty issues

We have already mentioned a series of parameters to be considered as well as a series of characteristics for the agents who participate in the social dialogue and public consultation on poverty and relate with delegation, representation, management system, legalization of opinion and action, etc. The above qualities should always be examined in relation to the priority assigned by each agent to dealing with poverty issues. An agent that was established with the main objective of combating poverty should be assessed differently from another large scale agent, expressing thousands of members and having significant influence, but places poverty combat low in their priorities. It is also made clear that the priority assigned to poverty combat should be examined in conjunction with the size and the organizational structure of each agent. Even if a large-scale agent (in terms of budget, number of members, staff, etc) does not have poverty as a main priority, they may be in a position to allocate more resources to the dialogue (for example to establish a special department) than an agent specializing in poverty but having scant resources.

At this point we should also take into account that most agents do not have fixed priorities but move within a general framework adjustable in accordance with the prevailing circumstances. As we will see late in detail, we can assume that social dialogue on poverty has not started in Greece as of yet. In this context there should be emphasis not on identifying the agents that place poverty high on their agenda, but rather on identifying every agent that could potentially contribute irrespective of their relationship with the poverty phenomenon under the present circumstances. It would be a mistake, though, to create an artificial pressure on agents to raise their performance in the poverty combat by placing it all at once at the top of their agenda. Poverty is a profound but not the only social problem and it should not be treated at the expense of other, but rather in an organized and balanced framework.

Element 8: the individual specialization in poverty issues and the transfer of social dialogue to a regional level

Poverty at a social dialogue and public consultation level is not an abstract scientific concept, but rather an economic, political and social phenomenon affecting large social groups. Respectively, various agents may represent or focus on the problems of such individual groups. Indicatively, these groups may be the elderly, the pensioners, the unemployed, the women, the children, the young, the repatriated, the toxic substance addicts, the immigrants, the farmers, the single-parent families, etc. Taking female poverty, for instance, according to data provided by KETHI ², in the last 30 years there have been vast changes regarding the position of women in the employment process. According to more recent estimates (2006) in the Europe of 25 the percentage of female employment remains at levels lower than 60% (in Greece it is 10 percentage units below the European average) while the decisions of the Lisbon Conference call for a rise in female employment at levels higher than 60% (see Eurostat: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>). The employment disparity between men and women remain wide and despite the significant variations among individual nations, it is common knowledge that women are on average in a worse position compared with men, with intense discrimination in terms of access, development, combining family and work, payment terms. Specifically, as regards payment discrepancies it seems that the job positions held by women are lower paid than those that are traditionally held by men, even when the qualifications, skills and responsibility requirements are the same. Women do not have equal opportunities in employment. A woman may be employed on a lower salary than a man starting his career at the same time and with the same employer. This first job may play a determining role in her future payment development. Also, women do not have equal opportunities in education, training and as a result in promotions. These opportunities affect payment. In addition, remuneration discrepancies at work are reflected in retirement; hence they have an impact both on the life of women both today

2. See KETHI webpage and specifically the program "Equal Pay- Mind the Gap", implemented by the Research Centre on Gender Equality (KETHI) in the context of the 5th Mid-Term Program on gender equality of the European Commission.

and on their future income from social security. All these should be examined in the context of a multiplying and recurring process: these problems are intensified by the under-representation of women in the process of collective negotiation. It is proven that women have a positive effect on the inclusion of equality in collective negotiation and the more they are involved in the negotiation process, the higher the possibilities of dealing with issues that promote gender equality. The above references are naturally not made in order to fully cover the respective issue but rather constitute a mere proof of how complex the issues of poverty for various specific cases are.

Hence, taking the above into account, the fragmentation of dialogue into individual issues relevant to these groups cannot be automatically characterized as positive or negative. On the one hand, it is obvious that such a specialization is extremely useful as the particular problems of each group require a special treatment. On the other hand, a dialogue conducted on this detailed basis demands more resources, more time, better organization and naturally greater dialogue experience which is probably absent in the present times. There may also be problems at a political level. Theoretically, one possibility is to have cooperation among agents specializing on different social groups for a massive mobilization and demand regarding poverty. There is also the possibility for the demands to be made separately, something that entails rivalry or even conflict among various interest groups. This of course, without being condemnable in principle, encumbers public consultation as a whole. Although the situation is changeable in time, we can assume that reality lies somewhere in the middle. Similar issues hold for the transfer of the social dialogue gravity centre from national to regional levels. This transfer may have a positive impact on the dialogue quality; however, it requires the maturity of a series of parameters in order to be established on the right bases.

Element 9: the documented knowledge on poverty and the acceptance of a common definition

Poverty is a complex phenomenon, constantly changing and taking on new forms. Understanding what poverty is and who the poor are is determined by the form and characteristics of each society as it historically develops. Natu-

rally there are significant variations as regards understanding poverty even among the members of each society as this is influenced by the social and financial status of individuals. The relevant literature suggests many different definitions and poverty measurement methods have been suggested, often classified into categories such as absolute and relative poverty or objective and subjective poverty measurement methods etc ³. Naturally each poverty definition has different origins and hypotheses hence leading to different estimations as regards the identification of the poor and the assessment of the poverty phenomenon. Evidently, it is not possible to have an objectively proper (or value neutral) definition or indicator of poverty that will enjoy the consent of all. Often the adoption of a poverty indicator is determined by the special social, economic and political conditions prevailing in each country ⁴. However, the development of dialogue on poverty and combat practices creates the need, for practical reasons, for an agreement as regards the definition of poverty and the identification of the poor. That is, it is necessary to determine the same phenomenon with the same concept (strictly defined) and not to refer to different situations and population groups. Obviously, the definition of poverty itself may be a question in the relevant dialogue.

The definition plurality as regards what poverty is and who the poor are in a society does not mean that there should not be documented and objective information and knowledge on the living conditions of the country's population. The documented information and knowledge constitute the necessary prerequisite for establishing the dialogue on solid foundations so as to thrive. The lack of appropriate statistics and data often leads to the adoption of poverty measurement indicators that do not tally (to a larger or smaller degree) with the selected original understanding and definition of poverty.

3. For a review of the academic dialogue regarding the poverty definition and its measurement methods see Atkinson (1983, 1989, 1998), Alcock (1993), Gordon and Townsend (2000), Piachaud (1987, 1993), Ringen (1988), Ruggles (1990), Townsend (1979, 1993).

4. Quite often, in many developing countries the adoption of an absolute poverty definition is influenced by the fact that large parts of the population fail to cover their basic living needs (food, shelter, clothes). In contrast, in developed countries the emphasis is placed on the relevant poverty definitions, that is, the parts of population with lower standard of living than what is considered acceptable in the country of reference.

As it arises from the above, a particularly vital issue is the way each agent obtains knowledge both on the theoretical issues of poverty definition and the particular living conditions of the country's population. To what extent does the understanding of the agent on poverty comes from a scientifically documented knowledge? Is it just the common resultant of the different officials' personal experience as it forms through current affairs, the media, personal contacts etc? Scientific knowledge entails substantial collaboration with research staff working on poverty issues, the participation in scientific events, the utilization of scientific publications, the access to suitable databases and the general cooperation with scientific agents as, for example, a poverty monitor station.

The acceptance of common definitions for poverty and the scientifically documented knowledge based on suitable data constitute the basic prerequisites for the relevant dialogue to succeed. In the opposite case, that is if the issue is a "poverty" defined differently by each agent involved, the dialogue is doomed to fail and even worse to reach dead-ends that will encumber the possible success of any future endeavors. As in the absence of a solid scientific basis there cannot be a consensus in a political level, a positive result could be achieved with the stipulation and acceptance of statutory commitments against poverty in an international, European and national level and the support of research on poverty.

Element 10: the stipulation of statutory commitments against poverty in an international, European and national level

As mentioned before, the acceptance of a common definition by all, or as many as possible, agents involved is determining for the launch and the development of the social dialogue and public consultation on poverty. However, even if all relevant scientific problems are overcome, as previously described, it is quite possible that each agent adopt their own criteria and definitions, either for political expedience reasons or merely on the basis of different opinions. The selection of a common definition as a dialogue basis cannot possibly be done with drawing lots, nor is there a supreme organization that could impose a solution. A long-term approach, along with a preliminary stage,

is required for solving this problem. At this point the stipulation of statutory commitments against poverty in an international, European and national level could prove useful. These could involve monitoring international activity and international conventions related to poverty, hunger, social exclusion, international development cooperation and aid and all similar issues by agents such as the United Nations Program Against Poverty, the World Bank, international NGOs, the European Union, the European Council etc.

In this context there could be similar stipulation in a national level, for instance in the Constitution and legislation texts. Such an attempt, though, would require a thorough preparation as well as the contribution of all Constitution interpreters not only regarding the review content but also regarding the advisability and implementation time of the action. A more practical and less time-consuming solution would be the development of a "Chart Against Poverty" (title for indicative purposes only), which could include the basic definitions and the basic criteria on issues of interest. The Chart, though, cannot by itself lead to overcoming consensus problems as nothing changes to that effect. But such a document, having no binding nature, could easily draw the attention of agents in the first instance. The Chart could safely serve as a point of reference for an initial recording of the agents' opinions on the basic technical issues of the dialogue. In this context, it could constitute the preliminary stage of the organization of the major event of the social dialogue launch. The basic prerequisites for the Chart development would be, first, the proper scientific documentation and second, the previous recording of all agents' opinions. The introduction of any imported or ready-made solution is doomed to fail despite being technically and scientifically perfect.

Element 11: the support of research, education and training on poverty

The development of documented knowledge by individual agents on poverty and the stipulation of statutory commitments against poverty in a national level towards the acceptance of a common definition, require the overall support of research, education, training and knowledge production on poverty issues. Even in this case, though, there are no measurable magnitudes, even if poverty could be defined as a specific discipline. This, of course, is unfeasible.

We can merely set out the following as factors for knowledge development on poverty:

- introduction of relevant courses in Higher Education Institutions (AEI)
- development of post-graduate programs
- preparation of doctoral theses
- establishment of scholarships on the above
- development and funding of research projects
- collection, processing and publication of appropriate statistics or data on a permanent basis
- utilization of international experience
- establishment of specialized agents, such as, for instance, a Poverty Observatory
- proper education and training of staff, especially through the utilization of the experience and networking of Vocational Training Centres and the agents involved in poverty issues

The quality enhancement of social dialogue could be aided specifically by the regular training of authorized officers of agents on poverty issues as well as on technical communication and negotiation issues. In any case, it is evident that the major part of funding should be covered by public resources, that is the Greek state or/ and the European Union. On no account should we expect funding from the poor themselves. There could also be a private sector contribution, even symbolic, in the context, for instance, of corporate social responsibility.

Element 12: the networking of each agent and their experience in social dialogue and public consultation issues

Successful communication is the key-concept for the dialogue success. The communication degree is not static but can develop and improve within the context of a mutual learning process. The current networking among agents involved or those who could potentially get involved in poverty issues is a

significant asset to this direction. However, networking and communication cannot be accurately measured, nor examined under a common framework. This is because the role of each agent regarding poverty is different, hence the objectives pursued by each may be in synergy or in conflict. Thus, communication may take on different forms, such as that of negotiation, plain information sharing, consultation or collaboration. Networking among more than two organizations sharing case-specific common interests is an impact multiplying mechanism, as the whole represents something more than the mere sum of the individual parts. Networking may include joining resources, information and staff sharing, planning of a common strategy, work distribution and activity coordination.

The establishment of second and third degree structures for claiming demands in a political level is based on the simple principle that unity brings power. In addition, it could also make other positive contributions such as the constant recording of the agents' capacity aiming at understanding the actual size and their objective capabilities (that may be more or even much less than believed), conducting surveys and constant recording of poverty problems and developments in the same and finding solutions for dealing with the theoretical and practical problems (such as, for example, the stipulation and acceptance of common definitions mentioned earlier), organizing NGOs communication through the establishment of standing and special committees and meetings and establishing an identity among the members, self-mobilization, enhancement of negotiating ability against the state and most importantly weaning from the state and drawing a strong independent course.

Of course, a federation or a confederation is not established overnight and the practical problems inherent in such an endeavor are many and complex. Illustrating, we note the issue of electing members for a Board of Directors. On what criterion are vote rights assigned to organizations? Provided there are equal rights, irrespective of the number of members, then there is a risk of creating a number of artificial small-numbered associations aiming at higher representation of a specific interest group (i.e. a union or a political party). In the opposite case, there is the risk of enrolling a large number of irrelevant individuals in various agents with the same undesirable result. In addition, the

systematic pooling of agents means the concentration of high political power. Hence, proper planning is needed in order to avoid problems of usurping this power. In any case, as seen earlier, the priority assigned to individual, rather than collective, effort towards access to decision-making agents is not an indigenous characteristic of the civil society, but rather a more general problem of the Greek society. Healthy networking of the third level organizations in higher levels is of paramount importance for the passage to maturity stage. Federations and confederations that enjoy the support of a large number of similar organizations hence a large part of society, could constitute the standard and main negotiator of political power and public administration raising significantly the collaboration level.

Element 13: the experience of each agent in influencing the development of social policy

The capacity of agents involved with poverty to influence the development and adoption of measures against poverty is connected with the actual experience of each in this field. In this respect, the participation of agents that have already developed communication channels with decision-making agents in the dialogue is positive, provided that these communication channels can be utilized for the purposes of public consultation. One way of exercising influence is the organization of scientific events on poverty, such as conferences and meetings. In practice, though, the conclusions of such activities remain unexploited as the political decision-making agents have not established collection mechanisms for such data, nor of course mechanisms of utilization of the same. A second way of exercising influence could be the actual participation of agents in decision-making bodies on poverty, for instance, with vote rights or at least the formal participation with a non-binding opinion right. However, at this point, it is questioned whether there are such decision-making bodies that do not take decisions in camera. Another informal way of exercising influence may be the double capacity of individuals that participate in political decision-making bodies while at the same time they are involved in agents dealing with poverty issues. These individuals may in each case exercise significant influence. Practically though, their involvement merely re-

mains a coincidence and naturally the success of the social dialogue on poverty cannot possibly be based on coincidences. The same holds in the case of the establishment of informal communication with decision-making bodies. In many cases such a communication may be equally or more effective than the statutory communication for reasons of flexibility, speed, directness, cost-effectiveness etc. Again though there still remains the risk of manipulation from uncontrolled personal choices. Another way is the public criticism and protest or the submission of alternative proposals. This way is more productive when based on the conduct of a reliable research whose outcomes are made public and affect public opinion, for example through the Media and/or the Internet. The above can be alternatively or additionally achieved with publications (books, leaflets, scientific reports etc) addressed either to public as a whole or to decision-making groups. Another particularly effective way of exercising influence on the establishment of policies about poverty could be the pressure exerted by the mobilization of a large number of voters. Based on current experience, pressures of this type can yield impressive results during pre-election periods. To the same direction lies the exertion of indirect pressure due to possible strong bonds between specific agents and certain political parties. These bonds may act positively when they facilitate forwarding demands to the authorities. Nonetheless, they may have the exact opposite result when they act as a breakwater for pressures exerted to the government from affiliate representative (i.e. trade union) agents. Finally, another popular way of exercising influence is organizing activism activities. One increasingly sees new forms of activism activities that draw attention with their originality. When examining the way of influencing the establishment of policies about poverty, one should take into account whether this is exercised in a local, regional, national or other higher or lower level.

Element 14: the establishment of a poverty observatory

The establishment of a permanent structure with the special objective of monitoring the poverty phenomenon in Greece, in the form of a poverty observatory, could be a positive factor in promoting social dialogue and public consultation on poverty. The observatory could contribute in the following ways:

- conducting research
- collecting and processing of statistics
- publication of periodic reports on poverty
- drawing up comparative studies and publication of relevant reports on poverty at a EU level
- establishment of library, database and information systems
- recording and enhancement of communication among agents involved
- pursuit of common acceptable standards and indicators for poverty identification
- utilization of international experience and practice
- development of public awareness methods
- development of information and educational material
- establishment of staff training activities on social dialogue, public consultation and poverty issues
- instigation of the organization of an opening national scale consultation event
- organisation of similar events on special topics
- establishment of an initial agenda on public consultation on poverty and its constant enrichment

The observatory could be basically staffed with a small number of permanent personnel. Henceforth, it could be staffed with external associates or visitor researchers that will rotate so as to have a regular inflow of new ideas as well as sharing acquired knowledge. Provided the staff comes from different agents related with poverty, the monitor station could thus become a reference point as the link among all these agents. In any case, though, gaining good will and high status is the necessary condition for the success of the monitor station. Lacking these qualities, it will never be accepted as an independent and reliable negotiator in dealing with poverty problems neither from

the decision-making agents nor from the poor themselves or the other agents. This prestige is directly related with the moral standard, the scientific knowledge and the independence of the monitor station staff.

Element 15: the participation, the number and the coordination of the agents-recipients of messages and decision-making

Social dialogue and public consultation on poverty are not an end in themselves but rather should yield specific results. In this respect, the participants in the dialogue should be not only those agents who make claims and demands but also those who have the means and manage resources that can be used in the realization of these demands. It should be expected that such agents belong, mainly but not exclusively, to the public sector. Similarly in this case, the more such participating agents are, the higher the benefit for the social dialogue, provided though that their number is not so high as to render procedures time-consuming and ineffective. Similar to the case of second and third degree representation of claiming agents, there can be some form of authorization in the case of authority agents so as to limit the number of people participating in the dialogue without limiting the representation range. Indeed, in dealing with poverty issues it is possible that many public agents are simultaneously involved, such as the Ministries handling portfolios of Economics, Finance, Social Solidarity, Health, Development, Domestic Affairs, Employment, Education, Agriculture and many others depending on the occasion. Obviously, even in the case that the above agents agree to participate in the dialogue, their coordination for problem-solving is particularly difficult even in the ideal case that financial resources are available and the willingness for problem-solving is granted. Let us suppose that there is an education access problem for a small group of students from a small island. In solving this problem there is probably necessary the involvement of the Ministries of Finance, Education, Mercantile Marine, the Aegean, Public Works along with a multitude of local agents. It would be very useful to have a coordinating agent that could serve as a single negotiator. On the other hand though, it would be technically impossible to have a coordinator that would know all the individual issues of the agents he represents, as it is equally impossible to assign such a high de-

gree of authorization and freedom of action to one individual or a small group of individuals. Hence, the problem is that the coordinator could instantly be degraded to another bureaucratic level which would merely forward issues to the other agents.

VI. Indicator for Participation in Social Dialogue against Poverty: pilot project

In the previous chapter we attempted the presentation, the theoretical foundation and the technical analysis of the parameters related with social dialogue and public consultation on poverty in Greece. These parameters, elaborated in the form of 15 indicators, make up the Indicator for Participation in the Social Dialogue Against Poverty. Then we make a first attempt to calculate this indicator by examining each element on the basis of the current circumstances. As it is later shown, the indicator records mainly qualitative characteristics, so it would be impossible to express it as a simple numerical magnitude. Also, since the dialogue has not been legislated as of yet, many of the remarks refer to hypothetical situations. In this context there is a great effort to keep at all times a clear distinction between the actual and the potential.

Implementation of element 1: the percentage of the population represented

Since, as mentioned earlier, social dialogue and public consultation against poverty have not been legislated nor launched as of yet, it would be rather premature to make estimates on the percentage of the population represented. The essence of this matter lies on a political level and specifically on the function system of parliamentary democracy, the analysis of which is much beyond the scope of our approach. The only point recorded is that the current political system certainly favors the development and prosperity of social dialogue and public consultation. From then on, public consultation is not conducted at an individual citizen level but rather at an agent level, as we will later examine. The number and the individual characteristics of the agents are those that will determine the final percentage of the population represented, as well as the level of this representation.

Implementation of element 2: the number of social dialogue and public consultation agents

As aforesaid, the participating agents in social dialogue and public consul-

tation on poverty can be public agents (government offices, public services, local administration organizations, research organizations etc) as well as civil society organizations (trade union bodies, NGOs, associations, self-support groups, federations and confederations, church organizations etc). Each one of the above agents can participate in the social dialogue and public consultation on poverty as an agent for problem identification, demand stipulation and solution seeking, also as an arbitration agent or supplier of documented scientific support or as an authority, decision-making and solution-implementation agent. We can also find agents that fall under more than one category. Following we list a number of agents who are potentially related with public dialogue on poverty. It should be particularly stressed that this list is indicative only, refers to a minimum number of agents and does not constitute a proposal but rather a point of reference in order to clarify and determine the picture of current conditions related to poverty.

No agent or individual can be a priori excluded from social dialogue and public consultation against poverty and its effects.

Agents whose opinion should be considered- for reasons that will be examined later- are:

[the agents are listed alphabetically]

1. Agents (associations, organizations etc) of foreigners (immigrants) living in Greece
2. Association of Prefecture Administrations (ENAE)
3. Caritas Hellas
4. Center for of Family and Child Support
5. Central Association of Greek Municipalities and Communities (KEDKE)
6. Civil Society Organizations (Indicatively: European Expression, European Perspective, LifeLine, 50 plus Hellas, Social Organization for Youth Support, Hellenic Network against Poverty, Red Cross, Onisimos, Hamogelo tou Paidiou (Child's Smile), charities and societies)

7. Economic and Social Committee
8. Federation of NGOs
9. General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE)
10. Greek Confederation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations (PASEGES)
11. Greek Manpower Employment Organization (OAED)
12. Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants (GSEVEE)
13. Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV)
14. Higher Administration of the Unions of the Public Servants (ADEDY)
15. Higher Confederation of Greek Multi-Children Families
16. Institute of Social Protection and Solidarity
17. Ministry of Development
18. Ministry of Domestic Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralization
19. Ministry of Economy and Finance
20. Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs
21. Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity
22. Ministry of Labor and Social Security
23. National Confederation of Disabled Persons (ESAEA)
24. National Confederation of Greek Trade (ESEE)
25. National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE)
26. Research and academic agents (Universities, Research Centers)
27. Research Center on Gender Equality (KETHI)
28. The Citizen's Advocate
29. The Greek Church and religious organizations of every religion and creed

Implementation of element 3: the number and distribution of the origin of individuals represented by each agent

The number of people represented by each one of the above agents, as any other agent for that matter who could potentially participate in dialogue processes, varies significantly. Equally varies the origin distribution of those represented in each case. Some agents, such as the Economic and Social Committee, the Citizen's Advocate, the Greek Manpower Employment Organization, the Research Center on Gender Issues, the Social Protection and Solidarity Institute and the National Statistical Service of Greece do not represent members in the sense examined herein, nor do they advocate in favor of third parties (without this meaning that for this reason they have no place in the dialogue- as also stressed elsewhere, every agent can play a different role in the dialogue context).

On the other hand, a number of collective agents secure the comprehensive representation of a large proportion of the general population. For instance, ASPE (Higher Confederation of Greek Multi-Children Families) established in 1931 and having henceforth undertaken the study and promotion of multi-children parents' demands and in general the promotion of their moral and material interests, represents approximately 180 thousand multi-children families that belong to its member-Associations and have the qualifications specified in law. Although there are no detailed data, it is evident that these people proportionately cover many social and geographical areas.

GSEVEE is the third degree panhellenic employers organization and one of the main social partners entering the National General Collective Employment Contract together with GSEE, ESEE and SEV. It is the supreme and most collective trade union body of the Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants of the country. It is active in the promotion and security of the professional, financial, cultural and social interests in general of the small businesses and under its power there are 72 federations, of which 50 local, 21 industrial and 1 of pensioners, 920 primary unions with 103,883 registered members (entrepreneurs). Here, as in the previous case, we have to do with a singularly wide representation covering a large part of the population. Naturally, in the

case of GSEVEE we cannot talk about a typical representation of the general population as the members' registration criteria are very specific. This parameter should be particularly taken into account in the participation of the agent in a potential dialogue on poverty. The National Confederation of Greek Trade aims at defending the interests of its members, promoting the contribution and importance of trade in the national economy, as well as the role it plays in the new economy globalization conditions as the major pillar of the production process. In addition to economic collaboration targets, ESEE works towards sharing know-how, spreading a representative collective organizations establishment culture, as well as developing social dialogue structures.

On the other hand, the General Confederation of Greek Workers represents more than 2 million workers in the private and wider public sector of the economy (DEKO (Public Utility Organizations), Banks). In its power it has 82 Worker's Centers comprising unions and local branches of panhellenic unions based within the limits of each prefecture and 69 industrial Federations made up of same or similar economic activity industry unions. The aim is the establishment of one union per plant and production industry; one Federation per production industry or economic activity sector; one labor center per prefecture and one third degree labor organization. GSEE, with its specific gravity and experience in social dialogue issues, can constitute a major negotiator in public consultation issues on poverty. The representation standard is immense. However, one should not overlook the fact that GSEE does not primarily aim at eradicating general poverty in the sense examined herein.

A third agent with wide representation and possible relationship with certain poverty aspects is the National Confederation of Disabled Persons. This is the third degree social-trade union agent of the disabled persons movement of the country that was established in 1989 by organizations of disabled persons and their families in order to defend issues of common interest for all disability categories and to constitute an independent and powerful representation agent in the Greek State and society. Today, the National Confederation of Disabled Persons officially holds the position of Social Partner in issues that interest directly or indirectly persons with disability and strives for the promotion

of policies that contribute to full participation in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the country. At a national level, the Confederation strives for the protection and defense of human and social rights of the disabled, the diminishing of social prejudice and the combat of the discrimination they experience. It pursues equal opportunities for disabled persons in all lines of life and the security of dignified living conditions and full social inclusion. In this respect, the Confederation is authorized, as we also will see later, to participate in public consultation.

On the contrary, as also mentioned elsewhere, the notion of representation is quite relative when we refer to religious agents. The Greek Church has an enormous popular base as well as an immense social intervention. However, the method and representation degree of all this population or particularly of the poor is extremely difficult to record accurately. For the same reason, the assignment of a particular role to the Church, in the context of a social dialogue on poverty, requires much thinking. Simultaneously, for formal and practical reasons one should place the other clerical- religious agents and their individual organization next to the Greek Church. Here, we could put, for example, Caritas as the accredited charity society of the Catholic Church, non-for-profit and non-governmental organization operating in Athens, Greece since 1981 under the auspices of the Catholic Hierarchy of Greece. Caritas Hellas is a member of Caritas Europe based in Brussels covering all European states. National Caritas operate in 155 countries throughout the world under the supervision of Caritas International based in Rome. Caritas Hellas represents the individual Caritas of the Catholic Church Districts of Greece in a National and International level, coordinates and promotes their charitable activities and supports them financially, if it can, communicates with and contacts similar NGOs both Greek and foreign participating in events and conferences of Caritas Europe and other foreign social agents. As in the case of the Greek Church, previously mentioned, the popular support is also granted in the case of Caritas and the other religions and creeds (albeit in a smaller population scale). Attention should be paid to the method and the representation standard of both the faithful and the target-group, namely the poor-recipients of financial and other aid.

Obviously, a significant role in the promotion of social dialogue and public consultation on poverty can and should be played by the Economic and Social Committee (ESC). The Greek ESC was established under L. 2232/1993 on the model of the European Union ESC that is based on a trilateral separation of represented interests, namely a division into three Groups: the employers'-entrepreneurs, the workers- private and public servants and the other categories comprising the farmers, the self-employed, the Local Administration and the consumers. A main characteristic of ESC is the equal treatment of the three groups and its aim is the promotion of social dialogue and through this the establishment (if possible) of common accepted stances on issues that concern the society in general or special parts of the same. In these issues poverty could and should be included. ESC does not aim at mitigating different ideologies and political views but rather pursues the identification of a common resultant, if any, through the presentation of different arguments and proposals on issues of common interest among its social partners. Also, with its proposals and opinions it tries to maximize the social benefit and minimize the potential side-effects from the implementation of individual government decisions. It is self-evident therefore, that ESC does not substitute in its operation the other state institutions nor the social partners that fully retain their autonomy and the right to stipulate their own views in the statutory bodies of ESC. These major pursuits of the ESC partners should also be accompanied by the principles of equal relationship, consent and respect for the distinct interest.

A valuable knowledge and experience can be also drawn from the field of civil society organizations. However, in this case also the parameter of the representation of specific parts of the population is neither granted nor measurable, while an additional issue emerging is that of second and third degree representation of these organizations. The Greek federation of voluntary NGOs is the second degree regulating body of voluntary NGOs operating within a wide and multi-collective range of social offer and awareness. It was established in 1996 responding to a need for coordinated action of NGOs. Its establishment was based on the principle that power is achieved through unity when it comes to achieving common goals and objectives and that the promotion of work and actions of individual voluntary organizations is more effective, namely ac-

tions that aim at the relief and solution of humanitarian problems characterizing modern societies. Today, dozens of agents are members to the Federation operating in various fields such as human rights, civil protection, development and humanitarian aid abroad, social solidarity (refugees- immigrants- poor), the environment, culture and sports, youth and children, health, social care and people with special needs. The active members of OEMKOE Organizations are estimated at approximately 12,000, while the large number of friends-volunteers that selflessly support its work should be taken into account. In this respect, the Federation represents a quite large part of socially aware individuals. On the other hand though, attention should be paid to the authorization degree given by these individuals both in general issues and more specifically in poverty issues. In contrast, as stressed elsewhere herein, attention should be paid to incidents of double representation, that is from individuals organizations and their second degree bodies.

A special case of a second degree NGOs organization specializing in poverty issues is the Greek Network Against Poverty. The Network is a founding member of the same-name European Network that was established in 1990, took on the legal form of Society in 1996 and includes so far 25 voluntary NGOs. The member-organizations retain their independent operation, their representatives elect a Board of Directors whose members participate both in the General Assembly and the Executive Committee of the European Network. The European Network comprises the equivalent National Networks of the EU member-states, is democratically administrated and constitutes an international body for alertness and social dimension intervention in the European policy. Although the Greek Network Against Poverty has a significant presence both in Greece and in the European Union, it has not managed so far to establish an agenda for discussion that will set forth specific issues. Its potential role, though, towards the social dialogue and public consultation on poverty remains significant as the network is perhaps the only agent in Greece whose primary goal is combating poverty.

The concept of representation also takes on a different meaning when we refer to various Ministries. The Ministries, as executive bodies of each demo-

cratically elected government, consequently express public will. This fact does not downgrade the value of public consultation. As also mentioned elsewhere, the social dialogue and public consultation thrive in a democratic regime environment and operate collaterally, rather than competitively, in parliamentary processes. Things are also different for the Greek Church which has a large number of members from every social line and geographical district. The different roles taken on by different members vary considerably as some are aid recipients, others are sponsors, others participate in decision-making and others were baptized Christian Orthodox but in other respects have no relationships with the Church. These considerations, though, do not intend to downgrade the social work of the church in Greece and its considerable contribution, particularly against poverty. They simply highlight once more the objective difficulties in depicting social dialogue with a plain indicator. In conclusion therefore, we note that the representation of a large number of individuals through a multitude of collective agents is in principle feasible. However, what cannot be secured is the balanced and proportionate representation of the different groups on the one, and on the other the accurate transfer of the opinion of each represented individual to a central level.

Implementation of elements 4 and 5: the management style of each agent, the authorization of representatives for participating in the dialogue and the agent's independence

As mentioned in the above element, the proportionate representation of wider social groups does not suffice, but it should be combined with the degree to which the opinion of the individual members is taken into account in each case. As we will see later, the vast majority of the agents operating in Greece and are potentially related with poverty issues, have a long democratic tradition and are administered with democratic processes that secure to a large extent the best possible representation of personal opinions.

For instance, the Higher Confederation of Greek Multi-Children Families is managed by a General Board comprising 22 elected members coming from First-degree organizations/ member-Unions amounting to 113 and are based in various areas of Greece. From the 22 General Directors, 7 make up the Ex-

ecutive Committee which implements strategic decisions of the General Board and the General Assemblies. Members of the first-degree Unions are approximately 180 thousand multi-children families. The supreme body of GSEVES is the General Assembly comprising the elected representatives of Member-Federations enrolled in the corresponding registries and retain this capacity. Each Member-Federation participates in the General Assembly with its representatives who represent the Federation and exercise the voting right on its behalf. The representatives of the Member-Federations are elected with proportional representation for a three-year term with a decision of their General Assemblies. The General Assembly, as a sovereign and supreme body, decides on every issue relevant to the scope and means of the Statutes. The decisions of the General Assembly are taken with absolute majority of the representatives present, unless otherwise provided in the Statutes and the Law. Votes are open or secret. A secret vote is compulsory conducted for the election of the Board of Directors, the Controlling Committee and the Supervisory Committee. For decisions concerning the change of scope, the dissolution of the Confederation and the modification of the Statutes, the presence of at least half of the representatives of the subscription settled Member-Federations and the majority of three-quarters (3/4) of the representatives present.

The supreme collective body of GSEE is respectively the Panhellenic Convention. It meets regularly every three years and is convened with the decision of the Administration. If deemed necessary it may also be specially convened. It is made up with the representatives of the labor centers and their federations that belong to the power of GSEE and are elected in the Local and Industrial Meetings whereby representatives elected by the Unions Meetings took part. The Convention votes the GSEE policies and action plan; it elects the 45 Administration members, the 15 members of the Controlling Committee and the 25 members of the Board of Directors; it decides on the proposals submitted by its organizations; it modifies the Statutes, should such a need arises, and approves the ending three-year term review and the budget of the following term. The Administration is elected by the Panhellenic Convention with secret voting using the proportional representation system. All general interest is-

sues that are relevant to the Labor Class and the Organization fall under the competence of the Administration.

The National Confederation of Disabled Persons is managed by persons with disabilities and parents of persons with disabilities that are not in a position to represent themselves. The Confederation, with its structure and composition, ensures respect for the diversity of the various disability categories. The sovereign body of the Confederation is the Panhellenic Convention of the Representatives of its Federations and Unions. It decides on all issues related to the Confederation. The Board of Directors, elected every three years by the Panhellenic Convention, is the statutory body managing the Confederation and comprises 33 members, of which 19 are persons with disabilities and 14 are parents of persons with disabilities. The Executive Secretariat is elected by the Board of Directors and comprises 11 members. These are persons with disabilities as well as parents of persons with disabilities. The jurisdiction of the Executive Secretariat is summarized mainly in the execution of the decisions of the Board of Directors hence it is responsible for the operation of the Confederation. The Controlling Committee is elected by the Election-Review Convention and comprises five members, of which three are persons with disabilities and two are parents of person with disability. Its task is the control and supervision of the financial management of ESAEA and the Administration Control.

The General Assembly of ENAE is called annually in regular meeting following the decision of the Board of Directors, while it can also be specially convened in extraordinary meetings, if there are reasons to that effect, with the decision of the Board of Directors taken in absolute majority of its members. The General Assembly is called with the decision of the Board of Directors upon application signed by the one fourth of the total number of representatives of Prefectural Administrations to the General Assembly. The application mentions the reasons for the call. The Board of Directors is obliged to call the General Assembly within twenty (20) days from the application submission and is considered to be in quorum when the Prefectural Administrations representatives present are more than those absent. The Presiding Board in the General Assembly is

the ENAE Board of Directors. The full minutes of the General Assembly are kept under the care and responsibility of the general secretary. The General Assembly approves its by-laws, discusses and decides on any issue. The decisions are taken in the absolute majority of those present.

The Board of Directors of the NGOs Federation is elected by the Federal Meeting of its regular members. The Board of Directors constitutes the guardian of the Federation Statutes and towards this direction it implements its decisions and goals and draws strategies. The Board of Directors of the Federation comprises nine members and it rotates. In each annual regular meeting elections are held for the replacement of members whose office ends. The above actions aim at the more democratic, more transparent and more effective Management of the Federation. In this way, the emergence of fixed poles is averted hence ensuring its decentralization. Each member leaving the Board of Directors, due to office expiration, may be re-elected after the lapse of one calendar year from their departure.

The management and administration of the PASEGES affairs is exercised by its Board of Directors, comprising 21 members with a four-year office term. The members of the Board of Directors are elected in the General Assembly by the regular representatives of its members. The General Assembly, which constitutes the supreme body, is annually called by the Board of Directors to a regular meeting. The operations of PASEGES are supervised by the President of the Board of Directors and are managed by the General Executive Officer in cooperation with its official structure, comprising 52 persons in total. Fifty eight percent of the total manpower are higher education graduates.

ARSIS is managed by the Board of Directors, comprising three of its founder members. For better organization and supervision of its activities, ARSIS is divided on the basis of three areas: Implementation Area, Development Area and Voluntarism Area. A determining role in the planning and development of local activities in the three cities where branches of the organization operate is played by the Coordination Committee (made up of head officers in the areas of Development, Implementation and Voluntarism), the Officers' Plenary (made up of all the active officers of the city), the Volunteers' Plenary (participating

in volunteer groups), the Members' Plenary (contributing in the promotion of the organization's goals) and the Local Council (whereby representatives of officers, volunteers and members participate). Other groups also meet on a local basis per area and action field, volunteer groups per activity and task forces of members with specific assignments. The Policy Board is set up on a panhellenic basis, comprising Local Councils representatives and having the mission of coordinating the organization's work in total and contributing in the establishment of its political directions.

Naturally, the above constitute a very limited selection of cases of multi-member organizations with democratically elected administrative bodies. As seen above, irrespective of the problems entailed in collective representation, we may assume that the administration bodies are authorized to act on behalf of the total number of members. More specifically, as regards authorization of particular individuals in the social dialogue and public consultation on poverty, we should note that there is no such experience in our country as of yet. It lies within the discretion of each agent to deal with the issue as they deem effective and appropriate. It should also be added here that apart from collective agents, there are other agent categories where there is no question of representation (ESYE, KETHI etc). The operation and role of these agents can be controlled based on the basis of statutory documents. The same holds for issues of agents' independence. Collective agents, some of which we mention as examples in the above paragraphs, should in general be considered independent as they are accountable only to their base. Henceforth, the dependence of non-collective agents on the state, the government or other agents should be thoroughly examined in each case.

Implementation of element 6: the legalization of the agent's involvement in poverty issues

So far we dealt with the question "who could contribute to social dialogue and public consultation on poverty?". This question is rather easy to answer since, as we saw, there is no reason to exclude anyone from this process. However, the results are different if the question is formed as "who is entitled to participate in the social dialogue and public consultation on poverty?". The answer

here is not straightforward and principally depends on the form of processes adopted (which are not fixed). So, while anyone is potentially entitled to participate in information and opinion sharing, the circle is dramatically narrowed when it comes to negotiation issues. For instance, which agent expresses the majority of the poor so as to be able to withdraw from further negotiations in their name? Then, we examine different agents in terms of their social activity and the potential legalization of their involvement in poverty issues. The following approach is not automatically an authorization of their involvement in poverty issues at a social dialogue level. This approach does not set specific criteria or limits towards this direction. The examination of case-studies that follows simply attempts to show the multitude of different interpretations that may emerge in the specific issue.

For example, one of the goals of the Social Protection and Solidarity Institute is the promotion of social dialogue on thorny subjects relating to policies in the field of social solidarity. In this respect, the Institute is obliged to participate in the dialogue. But how and to what extent? The Higher Confederation of Greek Multi-Children Families defends the family institution and strives for the maintenance of Greek traditions, the speed of the Greek-Christian Culture principles as well as the awakening of all the country's forces for the solution of the demographic problem. They also issue certificates for the benefit/ pension to the Multi-children mother that were instituted by the state, as well as certificates for any legitimate use (appointments, mortgages, transfers, entry to certain schools etc). A significant part of the efforts is devoted to the stipulation and promotion of demands and the solution of the Multi-Children parents' problems of whatever nature with appearances, memoranda and studies addressed to the Parliament, various Ministries and other public and private agents. The social work of ASPE takes up a large part of its activities, as a considerable number of families are in need of social, material and legal aid and support with a particular interest and care for the needs of Multi-Children families in remote islands, mountainous and infertile regions. What do all these mean in practice? Probably that the above confederation is not only legalized but also already participates substantially and actively in anything constituting the preface to a social dialogue on poverty of multi-children families in Greece.

As regards the Greek Church, love to fellow-beings constitutes the cornerstone of faith in the Greek-Orthodox doctrine. The contribution of the church both in culture establishment and in direct offer of social care service is indisputable. The Greek Church owns 190 social care units of open and closed type (Missionary Service of the Greek Church 1999). Of these, 34.7% operate in the area of elderly people, 25.8% cater for the poor and homeless, 11.8% for children and another 11.8% for people suffering from incurable diseases. The capacity of open and closed type units amounts to 5700 positions, that is approximately 50 positions per unit on average. Today 4150 people are accommodated on a constant basis, that is 73% of the total capacity. 70% of the church units are under 30 years old, while since the 60's there has been a trend of steady increase in units in operation. 73% of the 600 persons involved in the administration of church institutions come from higher or highest education. Of them, 60% are clergymen, while 68% are divinity and other ecclesiastical school graduates. The units employ 1026 persons as permanent staff, 85 paid staff and approximately twice as many external scientific associates. The volunteers amount to 480 persons, however, there are no data on the frequency and hours of work. Some units utilize the institution of students' practical training in the fields of administration and social work. 97% of the premises are privately-owned, of which 60% were acquired through donations and bequests. The majority of the units have a budget over 58,000 Euros (and 42,6% over 170,000 Euros), 14.8% appealed for financing to the Ministry of Health and Social Care and 3.7% to the European Union. The church states that the admission criteria to the units do not relate with the religious beliefs of the applicants at a percentage higher than 70%. The common criteria relate to poor people (48.8%), lonely (33.6%) and of poor health (16%). The units mainly provide accommodation, food, clothes, entertainment, financial aid, training, education and health care. The sheltered women outnumber men by 1.7 to 1 (on average 26.7 women and 15.4 men per institution). The Church also has a wide network of free mess and new clothes provision, charities, dowry provision to poor girls, support to single mothers, nursery day care units, medical assistance, blood donation, hospitality to poor, homeless and abused women, drug addicts care, youth camps and financial aid to students. In the light of the

above, therefore, the church makes a significant social intervention. Does this intervention constitute a *de facto* legalization for its participation in the dialogue on poverty? And if so, to what extent? What is the level and which are the processes for the participation of the poor themselves in the establishment of the social policy of the church?

The same questions hold, as before, for the organizations of the other religions and creeds. It is noted here once more that any reference to specific organizations is random (mainly where there is lack of available data) and on no account do they constitute an attempt to promote certain organizations and exclude others. Caritas supported the earthquake victims of Kalamata, Grevena, Aigio and Attica offering, on the advice of local Prefectures, caravans, professional refrigerators, heating stoves, bottled water and food. It participates along with other European Caritas and international organizations in European Union projects such as "Europe Against AIDS", "Homeless at railway stations" etc. The results of these studies are published in an official publication of the European Union. In October 2000, a Meeting was organized in Athens with the participation of many European organizations with the subject of "Social Exclusion and Refugees". It participated in the 1st and 2nd Panhellenic Exhibition of Voluntarism and Humanitarian Organizations at Zappeio, under the auspices of the International Development Alliance Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Greek Federation of Voluntary NGOs and the Charity Institute. In the context of the European program AGIS on Trafficking, it organized a Meeting with the subject of "Human Trafficking" with the participation of Greek and European NGOs and it participates in the second stage of the same program entitled: "Human Trafficking- Raising Awareness for Prevention", aiming at informing the public. In the context of this program Caritas organized in May 2005 another Meeting with the subject of "Human Trafficking- Raising Awareness for Prevention" whereby many NGOs participated. Hence, in this case also we see a rather rich social action. Although good intentions are not challenged, it should be noted that what is not *a priori* secured is the presence of a reliable mechanism of sharing experience developed in the above actions at a social dialogue level on poverty to the benefit of specific vulnerable social groups.

The Research Center on Gender Equality operates Information and Advice Centers for Women on Employment, Entrepreneurship and Social Inclusion in Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Heraklio and Volos which address unemployed women wishing to enter or re-enter the job market, working women facing unemployment, women wishing to set up their own business, women facing social inclusion problems, women who seek information and advice on issues of social inclusion, career orientation, employment and legislation and women seeking legal support. In this respect then, KETHI constitutes a significant knowledge accumulation agent on the current and important issue of female poverty. In the case of KETHI also, the question is how the potential contribution is assessed and how its specific gravity in a context of conflicting negotiations is measured.

The Economic and Social Committee is a constitutionally recognized state institution. According to article 82, paragraph 3 in the Constitution "A law prescribes what concerns the establishment, operation and responsibilities of the Economic and Social Committee whose mission is the conduct of social dialogue on the general policy of the country and especially in the disciplines of economic and social policy, as well as the expression of opinion on bills and legislation proposals referred to the same". The institution of ESC first started in the 50's at a national level and was then adopted in the Rome Convention for the European Community. It has since seen a great development in most European Community countries. More recently it was introduced to Eastern European countries and third Mediterranean countries where it served as a mechanism for securing direct communication with the European Union. The Economic and Social Committee, one of the statutory bodies of the European Union, was established in 1957 and held its first official meeting in 1958. The expansions of the European Union gradually increased membership. The consecutive Conventions assigned it increasing and more extensive responsibilities. The main task of the ESC is to issue opinions which then submits to the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council. ESC may express opinions on any area during European legislating procedures or to give opinion on its own initiative. Hence, in this case the role is granted and instituted, and contrary to the above agents, fully specified as it is limited to opinion level.

The Greek Federation of Voluntary NGOs is a totally different case. Its scope includes the promotion and spread of Voluntarism in Greece and abroad, the protection of human life and dignity in any possible way whatsoever, the moral and material support of the less privileged members of society with any possible means and their faster and more effective integration in the economic and social web. At the same time it suggests ways for skills improvement of its members in the development of their work and claims their general and statutory demands as well as the participation of the same and its members in financed volunteer action projects. It also promotes research and literature in voluntarism topics and prepares and implements programs of humanitarian and development alliance at a local and international level. It is rather difficult to assume from the above the potential role of the Federation in the social dialogue on poverty. On one side, it appears that its goals mainly focus on the promotion of the idea and capacity of voluntarism in Greece. On the other hand, though, its scope includes statements that clearly relate with poverty issues. What would be worth examining is which individual organizations are members of the Federation. Some of them are more relevant to social issues, others less and some not at all. So, in assessing the weight of the Federation involvement in poverty issues this parameter of unequal representation should be considered. In this context, the authorization degree of individual organizations to the Federation should be also examined. It is difficult to distinguish beforehand when to address the Federation and when its individual organizations.

At an individual organizations level things are rather more complicated. European Expression, for instance, is an independent non-governmental organization of a non-for-profit and non-partisan nature, established in Athens in 1989 and operating in Greece, Cyprus and internationally. It promotes the idea of united Europe with the end aspiration of a form of federal organization and integration for the European Union and federalism as a universal movement. It aims at the promotion and enhancement of the civil society, the deepening and consolidation of democratic institutions, the promotion and respect of human rights and civil liberties, especially in the Mediterranean region, central, eastern and northeastern Europe, the Black Sea. It also pursues the instigation of public dialogue, the awareness, the sensitization and participation of

European citizens in the construction of Europe placing the emphasis on the youth as regards the intercultural understanding, the education and solidarity, the nourishment of European conscience, the problems and particularities of youth. It contributes in the spread and establishment of the values of open and tolerant society, social pluralism, civil democracy and social economy of the market. It participates in the constant effort for creative adjustment of economic, social and political structure, both domestically and internationally, to the new facts, developments, needs and standards established by the course of the European integration and globalization.

It proceeds with the scientific study and presentation of European integration issues, especially in the light of statutory and political developments, the Europe of citizens and democracy, of the youth, the women and all disadvantaged groups, of culture, national identities, social Europe and the environment. In such a wide range of interests, it is difficult to discern a possible link to poverty issues. On the other hand though, we cannot exclude an agent who seeks comprehensive solutions at a high political level.

On the very opposite to the above organisation, as regards the breadth of scope, lies LifeLine which is a Greek NGO organised in the form of non-for-profit charitable society. Its goal is the provision of free care, protection and safety to the elderly on a 24-hour basis, all days a year, pursuant to orders arising from the European Program SAFE 21 is a Pan. SAFE 21 which is a Pan-European Research Program implemented from December 1996 to November 1999. Its aim was to examine the contribution capacity of current Fixed Telephony Technology in the implementation of a policy that could lead Social Services to the provision of care, protection and safety for the elderly in the 21st Century. The action program concerns the provision of care, protection and safety to the elderly in collaboration with the municipal social care services. The program refers to all the elderly (over 65) irrespective of their financial or marital status. However, priority is given to those living alone and their income does not allow them to secure a necessary independence. LifeLine in an initiative of the active citizens' society, so as together with the state and local administrations to deal with problems of abandonment, isolation, languish and insecurity ex-

perienced by the elderly in Greece. Here, the case is different as this organisation does not represent any members nor is a research agent, but rather contacts by objective many people of the same target-group hence can convey their voice without being authorised, though, to do so. This case differs from that of other organisations, as for example 50 plus Hellas which has a member base coming from the same target-group (regardless that in both the above cases dealing with poverty of the elderly is not a main goal).

On the very opposite, again, of dealing with problems of the elderly, Arsis is an NGO specializing in social support of the youth and the defence of youth rights. It was established in October 1992 and operates with centres in Athens, Thessaloniki, Volos, Larisa and Karditsa. The main objective of the organisation is to secure positions and opportunities for all young men and women and the respect for their rights as they are instituted in the Greek and international law and especially in the UN Convention on Child's Rights. The mission of Arsis is to take action in the prevention and combat of social exclusion of youth focusing on the ages between 15 and 21. In this context, Arsis develops original methods and tools for the support of the youth, establishes and participates in volunteer and social solidarity networks, works with private and public agents in Greece and abroad and promotes statutory proposals concerning the improvement of social policy on youth. Arsis proposes the promotion of social partnership and the distinguishing of the personal value of the youth and opposes policies based on suppression and generate poverty, inequality and social exclusion. The organisation gathers and mobilizes hired and voluntary manpower and operates on the principles of collectivity and social solidarity, democracy and mutual respect. Hence, at a Statutes level poverty constitutes a priority for this organisation. More specifically, though, in the issue of youth representation the situation is getting more complex by the fact that a proportion of them are minors. Consequently, conveying their views in a social dialogue level on poverty may ask for more attention compared to other cases described.

The Greek Red Cross is the largest NGO in Greece with composite work based on volunteer action and direct response from the citizens. It operates aiming

always at the relief of human pain at war and peace times, supporting injured, sick, refugees, elderly, people with financial difficulties and people from any vulnerable population group. Its action has been associated with alertness, solidarity, altruism and is a synonym to disinterested offer and selflessness. The main aims and objectives of the GRC are the assistance and support to the work of the Military Medical Service, the medical care of the injured and sick, as well as the protection of captives, civilians and war victims; the assistance and support to victims of natural disasters and epidemics and humanitarian activity, independent or in collaboration with the State and social agents. In collaboration with other statutory agents, public or not, the Greek Red Cross stands by any individual, family or group facing hardships without setting any racial, national or financial status limits to its action. At the same time, whenever and wherever there be need abroad, the Greek Red Cross works in collaboration with National Associations of other countries for the supply of international aid relief.

The Social Care Sector of the Greek Red Cross, catering for a wide range of modern society needs, promotes programs dealing with contemporary social issues. It examines the current social needs and demands and proceeds with planning and implementation of programs for addressing them fully and immediately. The Social Care Volunteers are 2,000 in Athens and 1,500 in the province. Fully conscious of contemporary problems, the Greek Red Cross develops the composite work of Social Care always placing man as an entity in the centre of its activities. With its social action, it caters for all citizens in need of care such as the Elderly, the children, the sick, the disabled, the unemployed, the minority groups, the imprisoned and ex-convicts, the homeless etc. Professional Social Workers with the support of specially trained volunteers offer social work providing advice and support as well as basic needs cover to individuals and families facing financial or social problems. The Sector also engages in the supply of humanitarian aid to people afflicted by natural or other disasters. At the same time, the Social Care Sector, in an effort to extend its provisions and services, utilized national resources and European Union funds and submits proposals for admission to funded projects. Obviously in the case of the Greek Red Cross, social intervention is significant and extends, among

others, to issues related to poverty. However, there is not sufficient documentation regarding the extent to which this organisation is authorized to speak on behalf of the people in the target-group.

The Greek Confederation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations was established in 1935 and is a Legal Entity of Private Law. It constitutes the supreme ideological and regulating agent of the Agricultural Cooperative Associations of the country. It supports, furthers and promotes their activities and represents them at an international, European and national level. In the context of its activities for the support of its members, PASEGES, among other things, carries out studies, projects, researches and enters labor or service contracts generally related with agricultural and more specifically with cooperative development. It closely monitors the agricultural, cooperative, tax and development legislation that interests farmers and their organizations, submits proposals and claims their alignment with their interests and needs. It also expresses opinions, pursuant to a legislative provision, on issues related with economic support and incentives provided to agricultural cooperative associations as well as on bills, decrees and decisions that interest its members. It negotiates and enters collective labor agreements relating to the staff of agricultural cooperative association of any degree. It coordinates the activities of the agricultural cooperative organisations and supports their work providing scientific and technical support, advice and services for their organisation and development. In this case there is a gap, as in the above it does not arise that the Confederation is aware of poverty issues or that it intends to do something to deal with them in the immediate future. On the other hand, based on available empirical evidence, farmers are a social group particularly afflicted by poverty.

Implementation of element 7: the priority assigned by each agent to poverty issues

As it arises from the above, a great number of agents operate in Greece representing large social groups. Similarly, a great number of agents produce significant social work. What is lacking, though, with regard to the issue in question is the operation of agents who place the poverty issue high in their priori-

ties. The only agent who places dealing with poverty at the top of its agenda is the Greek Network Against Poverty. Its individual goals are the incorporation of policies against poverty and social exclusion in the agenda of the European Union and national governments' bodies, the promotion and intensification of actions against poverty on a national and European level and the exertion of pressure for influencing competent individuals and authorities in favour and along with those social groups that experience poverty and social exclusion. Its objectives also include the identification and combat of the causes and mechanisms that drive a large part of the population to poverty and marginalization, the sensitization of the citizens and the state on the problems of social groups afflicted by new forms of poverty, groups that live on an income below the tolerable limit and those who are deprived access to welfare state services for all citizens, i.e. elementary and secondary education, health and social care services, social security and other. In addition, it aims at exerting pressure on a national and European level for the promotion of proposals and changes in the implemented social and economic policy. The marginalized individuals and groups should be encouraged to exercise their rights and fight the causes that create their seclusion, so as to participate on equal terms in the social and economic life. The Greek Network Against Poverty has organized conferences, seminars and other meetings for its members, participates in all task forces and collective bodies of the European Network, supports the participation of its members in European seminars, monitors the development and implementation of national social policy and proceeds to interventions accordingly. It also issues regular press releases and communicates with the Media, while it operates an office in the centre of Athens for its organizational and communication needs. It is open to any form of voluntary effort aiming at the assistance of individuals and groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion, so that they come out of their seclusion, claim their legal rights and improve their status as citizens.

Implementation of element 8: the specific specialization in poverty issues

We have already referred to agents representing specific social groups. These agents have acquired or may acquire (provided the respective priority is

given) valuable experience and knowledge on the particular poverty problems faced by these social groups as well as on the respective combat policies. The General Confederation of Greek Workers and the Higher Administrating Committee of Public Servants are aware of the problems of the poor working people; the Higher Confederation of Greek Multi-Children Families the problems of multi-children families, the Higher Confederation of Disabled Persons the problems of disabled persons' families respectively, and so on. The list is inexhaustive. The "Onisimos" Society provides allowances and covers the needs of imprisoned persons and their families, sees to prison release on strict criteria (poor persons, non-recidivists etc), provides short-term hotel accommodation after release to those facing accommodation problems, financially supports the charitable funds of Prison Social Services, offers free legal support to poor prisoners, supports prison libraries and sees to the employment rehabilitation of the released. In this respect, therefore, it has developed a unique and valuable know-how in dealing with poverty issues related to this specific social group. Similar examples are many for various socially excluded or vulnerable population groups.

In conclusion, therefore, we can say that there is no problem regarding finding agents specializing in the representation of specific, vulnerable groups' poverty issues. The problems remain in the reliability and authorization of representation, the risk of rendering the dialogue multifarious and meaningless and the relative weight each of those agents is entitled to. Besides, as mentioned elsewhere, the persistent pursuit of one group's goals may function competitively with regard to the goals of the rest.

The organization of social dialogue in Europe was initially at a national level. With the increasing promotion of the idea of European integration, though, social dialogue institutions were organized at supranational level. At the same time though, as in the case of almost all the efforts in dealing with policy problems, there was a simultaneous shift towards regional level. Irrespective of whether this was seen by many as a conscious effort of the European Commission to diminish the role of national governments to its own interest, this transformation moved steadily in various levels. In this context the issue of

regional social dialogue emerged. In Greece, in particular, we have the first discussions on this issue after 1975. However, the general political situation and more importantly the contemporary method of administrative development did not allow for such experimentation. Hence, the issue remained in theoretical level until the early 90's when new facts, such as the administrative reorganization of services, the institution of 2nd degree local administration, the promotion of the Regional General Secretariats institution and the establishment of Economic and Social Committee, sparked afresh the relevant dialogue. So, in 1994 the Prefectural Economic and Social Committees were established as opinion bodies in the context of the institution of Prefecture Administration. Specifically, with P.E 57/95, the issues of representation of organizations in paragraph 5, election and office term start and end, revocation or substitution, constitution and operation of the committee are specified. The prefectural ESC constitutes the first real step towards a regional social dialogue that can be utilized and act as the foundation for a productive regional social dialogue. However, as evidence shows, the institution of Prefectural Economic and Social Committees has not yielded the expected results as of yet.

Implementation of elements 9 and 10: the documented knowledge on poverty, the acceptance of a common definition and the stipulation of statutory commitments against poverty in an international, European and national level

In Greece, an official definition for poverty has not been adopted, unlike other countries (e.g. USA). Past research has adopted different poverty definitions on each occasion according to the opinion of each researcher as well as the restrictions imposed by the available statistical data. Besides, research on poverty in Greece remained rather marginalized for years. The fast growth rate experienced in the country the first two decades after the Second World War and the popular belief that this growth would benefit all parts of population did not encourage the research interest in studying inequality and poverty. The mid-seventies crisis (aggravated by the first petrol crisis) and the following recession, reignited internationally the interest in the study of poverty. It was found that not all parts of the population are equally afflicted by the recession

and that in prosperous developed countries of the western world large parts of the population had quite low living standards. In Greece, though, lack of appropriate statistical data did not allow a respective development of research activity in poverty study until the mid-80s⁵. One of the definitions that prevailed at a European Union level is the assumption that an individual (or a household) is poor when their income (or spending) is lower than a percentage of the corresponding average or median income (or spending) of the country. This is the definition used by Eurostat in its assessments and it has been adopted in several poverty studies, especially in developed countries (see Eurostat, 2002, Dennis & Guio 2004). Specifically, originally the relevant poverty line was set at 50% of the average income. However, as average income is very sensitive to extreme prices incidents, it was later substituted the median which is not affected by extreme prices. The adoption of 60% of the median income emerged empirically as the income distribution is leftward and it was found that 50% of the average income lies approximately at the same level with the 60% of the median. The prevalence of the specific definition does not reflect its superiority against other definitions in examining poverty (suggested in relevant literature) but is mainly due to the fact that it is more easily understood and can be measured relatively easily based on the statistical data available in each country (or does not require the generation of costly data) (see Papatheodorou 2006). This definition was prevalent in the poverty studies conducted in Greece after the 80s. Also, it is the definition used in comparative analyses by Eurostat as well as the National Action Plans for Social Integration. On the basis of this definition, the poverty percentage in Greece is 21% and is one of the highest in the EU⁶. At the same time studies using a similar definition and statistical data show that this high poverty percentage in Greece appears rather stable in the past 25 years.

The Greek Constitution does not include explicit commitments against poverty or the establishment of a universal right on social protection (see Katrouga-

5. For a detailed study review on economic inequality and poverty in Greece, see Papatheodorou and Petmezidou (2004), Mitrakos and Tsakloglou (1998), Petmezidou (1996).

6. Based on recent estimates, Greece together with Slovakia and Ireland are the countries with the highest poverty percentage among the 25 EU countries (Guio 2005)

los 2004). The relevant provisions refer to the protection of certain population groups (war victims, widows and orphans, multi-children parents etc). There are various allowance and/ or benefit in kind programs to various population groups provided by various legal entities.

Implementation of element 11: the support of education and research on Poverty

Greece lacks a research agent specializing in the study and monitor of poverty and its combat. This role could be assumed by a Poverty Observatory, as elaborated elsewhere herein. In addition, there is a critical mass of Higher Education Institutions and researchers that satisfactorily meet the demand of basic education on the poverty subject area. Moreover, a significant literature around this issue is being developed. Recent scientific studies and publication on poverty include the following: ESYE (2006), Mitrakos and Tsakloglou (2003), Papatheodorou and Petmesidou (2006), Papatheodorou (2006), Papatheodorou and Petmezidou (2005a,b, 2005), Tsakloglou (2000), Tsakloglou and Mitrakos (2006).

Further on, various research agents seem to have the resources for considerable research on the poverty subject area. For example, the National Statistical Service of Greece is a General Secretariat of the Ministry of Economy and Finance, organized in a central office with two general divisions and twelve central divisions and one decentralized division. ESYE does not have members and does not represent specific parts of the population, but has 1,118 officers of which 800 belong to the central division and 318 to decentralized divisions (Regional and Prefectures). ESYE collects data from individuals, households, public and private organizations in every activity industry (agriculture, manufacture, commerce, service), public offices, local administration, public utility organizations, educational institutions, hospitals, social security organizations and other sources, which then, upon suitable processing, are turned into tables. From this perspective, the contribution of ESYE in collecting and processing data related to poverty in Greece may be immense. The response degree of the above sources is considered satisfactory and this facilitated the collecting work of ESYE. Statistics compiled by ESYE - monthly, quarterly, an-

nually, five-year and ten-year- cover almost all activity sectors. Demographic data (population in different categorizations, natural population movement-marriages- births- deaths), employment and unemployment data, data on health and social security, education, justice, production process, public finance, prices, national income and finally cultural activities make up the basic material for the statistical tables and various indicators compiled by ESYE on a short and long-term basis. The State is the main user of these statistics and indicators on the basis of which it plans, implements and monitors its policies on various areas. Next come the European Union that needs individual data of its member-states in order to compile European statistics, international organizations (UN, UNESCO, FAO, OECD and other), businessmen, scientists, researchers and analysts but also laymen. ESYE was traditionally the main supplier of data for the poverty analysis in Greece. The income tax data were practically the only source of information for economic inequality studies for the country until the mid-70's. This happened, despite the considerable problems entailed in these specific data for such analyses, mainly a) due to high tax evasion and grey economy prevalent in Greece and b) due to the low percentage of the population that filed income tax statements. In 1974 ESYE conducted the first Survey of Family Budgets (EOP) with a cross-country coverage. Hence, from the beginning of the 80's until the late 90's EOP constituted the most commonly used data source for the study of inequality and poverty in the country. In the years 1994-2001 ESYE undertook on behalf of Greece the European Community Household Panel Survey. This is an annual survey on the same household sample aiming at collecting comparable data and information on income, living standard and demographic characteristics of households in all EU countries. This survey was substituted in 2003 by the European Union-Statistics on Income and Living Conditions. The last two surveys constitute the most widely used data sources for the analysis of poverty and inequality in Greece since the late 90's.

Expertise on poverty and deprivation issues could be developed by agents such as the National Center of Social Research, the Planning and Economic Research Centre, the Social Welfare and Solidarity Institute, the Labor Institute

of GSEE but also certain University departments such as the Department of Social Policy, Democritus University of Thrace (having already research experience in issues of poverty and exclusion analysis) or the Social Policy Department of the Panteio University. Many research agents focus on specific social groups. For instance, the Research Center on Gender Equality which is a Legal Entity of Private Law operates centrally in Athens and regionally in Thessaloniki, Patras, Heraklio and Volos, under the supervision and funding of the General Equality Secretariat of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralization. The main axis of the KETHI activity development is the conduct of social research on gender equality issues and the promotion of women in all sectors of political, economic and social life, within the frameworks of the policy determined by the General Equality Secretariat. The goals of KETHI are the conduct of research and scientific studies on gender equality issues, the documentation and information supply on gender equality issues in employment, entrepreneurship and social inclusion; also, the support of women in entering the job market, the sensitization, education and training of individuals, agents, groups and organizations on issues related to gender equality, the undertaking of initiatives for the promotion of gender equality in multi-cultural conditions, the planning, implementation, monitoring and assessment of programs promoting gender equality goals. In addition, KETHI goals include raising awareness on gender equality issues with the publication and publishing of studies, surveys and other information materials, as well as the production of audiovisual material and the development and operation of pilot institutions supporting and promoting equal participation of women.

What is required at a social dialogue and public consultation level is not simply knowledge and education on poverty issues, but rather education on the essence and the techniques of social dialogue, communication and negotiation. This education field is not equally developed and the rather scant initiatives present mainly come from the directly concerned parties, that is, the social partners.

Implementation of element 12: the networking of each agent and their experience in social dialogue and public consultation issues

The agents' networking and experience in social dialogue and public consultation issues are difficult to assess accurately. Apart from other objective difficulties, these are multitudes that may vary greatly in time. Also, the presence of communication does not automatically characterize its nature, which may be friendly, neutral or hostile. Equally difficult is the assessment of intensity in each one of those cases. As already mentioned, a first attempt of public consultation was made in the context of National Action Plans for Employment and Social Exclusion where agents such as GSEEE, GSVEE and the Greek Network Against Poverty contributed with their proposals.

The Higher Confederation of Greek Multi-Children Families participates in committees of various Ministries (Labor, Environment and Public Works, Health and Social Welfare etc) and collaborates with various organizations or associations pursuing similar social goals, such as EDIM, FIADIP and the Cyprus Organization of Multi-Children Families, while at the same time it represents multi-children parents in COFACE which is the EU Countries Confederation of Family Organizations. GSEE is, among other things, a member of the International Confederation of Free Unions (DSES), which comprises 231 member-organizations in 150 countries in all five continents with 159 million members. The Confederation has three main regional organizations, ORAP for Asia and the Pacific, ORAF for Africa and ORIT for the American continent. DSES works closely with the International Labor Organization, the Economic and Social Council of the UN, UNESCO and FAO. It keeps contacts with the National Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization and has offices in Geneva, New York and Washington. GSEE participates as an equal social partner in the National Collective Labor Contract as well as the individual industrial agreements. It participates in the Economic and Social Committee and in a multitude of other statutory bodies, thus contributing in the establishment of a healthy business environment.

As a statutory representative of collaborating farmers and their organizations, PASEGES supports their positions abroad participating in European and international organization such as the Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the European Union (COPA), the General Confederation of Agri-

cultural Co-operatives in the European Union (COGEGA), the International Union of Tobacco Planters (UNITAB), the International Confederation of European Beet Growers (CIBE), the Advisory Committees of the European Union on horizontal and industrial issues of the agricultural sector and the European Economic and Social Committee (ESC), while it closely follows development in the International Commerce Organization (ICO). At a national level PASEGES participates in Boards of organizations and agents such as the Greek Farmers Security Fund (ELGA), the Organization of Farmers' Security (OGA), the National Foundation of Agricultural Research (ETHIAGE), the Organization of Agricultural Vocational Education and Training (OGEEKA), the National Education Council (ESYP), the Hellenic Milk Organ (ELOG) and others. It also participates in the Economic and Social Committee (ESC), national committees and councils such as the European Support Framework Monitoring Committees, the Entrepreneurial Programs Committees of the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food, the National Committees of Employment and Social Protection, the National Consumer Council, the National Export Council, the National Competitiveness Council and also regional councils and opinion committees for the management of actions and activities relating to the agricultural development of the country. At the same time, PASEGES participates in Greek Professional Organizations such as the National Organization of Olive Oil and Olive Professionals (EDOEE) that is the major Organization of Olive Producing Agents in the country. It also participates in the National Organization of Professional Tobacco Growers (EDOK) and the National Organization of Vine and Wine Professionals (EDOAO).

The Economic and Social Committee comprises the President and 48 other members who make up three groups with equal number of members. Of them, the first represents employers, the second the workers and the third other categories. The members of the first group are appointed per four by the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants and the National Confederation of Commerce and per one by the Greek Banks Association, the National Confederation of Hoteliers, the Association of Greek Ship-owners, the Association of Greek Contracting Companies. In the second group 11 members are appointed by the Greek Confederation of Greek Workers and five by the Higher Administration of Public Serv-

ants Associations, selected, to the extent possible, from different sectors. Five members of the third group come from the Greek Confederation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations, two from the General Confederation of Agricultural Associations, one, self-employed member comes from the Regulating Committee of Lawyers, the Greek Medical Association, the Greek Technical Chamber, the Greek Economic Chamber, the Greek Geotechnical Chamber and there is also the participation of one representative of consumers and three members from the Central Association of Greek Municipalities and Communities.

The Social Welfare Division of the Greek Red Cross utilized resources coming from the European Union and national funds (Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, Ministry of Labor and Social Security). The planning and implementation of programs at national and international level constitute a significant operating sector for the development and spread of new practices for dealing with contemporary social needs faced by many groups that are experiencing social exclusion. The Social Welfare Division participates as member in task forces and in international collaboration networks operating in the context of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation and the European Red Cross Office in Brussels. Indicatively, we mention the West-European Network for the development of Voluntarism, the European Alliance Network for psychosocial support and the Red Cross cooperation Platform on Refugees and asylum applicants. Also, in the context of European programs it participates in wide international alliances referring to vulnerable population groups, aiming at sharing expertise and know-how, developing innovative approaches and common work tools. Within the operation of Regional Divisions of the Greek Red Cross Social Services have been established and operate in junction points of the country. The Social Services are agents that exercise social policy in the Region and are staffed with social workers assisted by trained volunteers. The main activity sectors of the Regional Social Services are the attraction, training and mobilization of volunteer groups, the response to emergency social needs and the psychosocial support of individuals and families, the intervention during crises (natural disasters, massive population arrivals etc), the development of special programs for the support of "vulnerable" population groups.

More specifically, as regards the networking of civil society organizations it should be noted that despite relevant experience, there are distinct limitations. The organizations do not always share the same goals but rather independent, complementary or even conflicting, as it is analyzed in the element on individual specialization of agents on poverty issues. Besides, even the individual values supported by an organization or the intensity of the claim may vary depending on the time, the place or the circumstances. At the same time, there is sometimes a tendency to turn multi-networking into an end in itself, with the result of the organizations moving away from their real goals, increasing bureaucracy and a final decline in effectiveness. The tendency of NGOs towards the establishment of rather fixed networks is not fully confirmed and the current performance is further downgraded if one considers that the indicated networks mainly refer to loose and informal collaborations which are exhausted in the organization of an event or a common publication. Hence, the absence of second and third degree organizations constitutes a major structural problem in the field of Greek NGOs. Most organizations develop horizontal cooperations. Many work with the Greek Church. A regular cooperation is developed with municipalities also. A third in row partner of NGOs is the public services as well as the local Health and Welfare Divisions. The civil society organizations also cooperate with agents of all educational grades.

The concept of networking has both a horizontal and a vertical dimension. The former involves any form of collaboration of civil society organizations with other organizations similar or not and other agents of the public and private sectors without an hierarchy relationship being established. It involves joining resources, information and staff sharing, establishment of common strategy, work sharing and coordination of activities and intervention methods. More rarely it extends to the establishment of common structure and common budget. The vertical dimension refers to the establishment of second and third degree organizations in the form of federation and confederation respectively.

The social sector civil society organizations in our country do develop a horizontal cooperation with similar or not organizations, with the church and other

organizations of religious nature, with central and local administration offices and educational and private agents. The cooperation direction is not granted. Sometimes coordination for the achievement of common goals is established. Other times the organizations are called to offer help and other times the same seek support. Their reasons for networking are information collection, prestige and credibility pursuit, third-party influencing capacity raise and fund-raising. In general there is a willingness to develop alliances while the cases of competitiveness for funding or fame are minimal. On the other hand though, these alliances are usually occasional, short-termed and informal and are largely based on personal and interpersonal relationships.

As regards vertical organisation in second and third degree bodies, the case is different among self-support organisations on the one, and service provision organisations to third parties on the other. The former managed to get organized early in federations and confederations (such as ESAmE) and to statutorily establish their presence in public decision-making and social policy establishment bodies. Their main role, though, seems to exhaust itself in the formulation of demands and the establishment of claims against the state, in the context of a peculiar cooperation- suspicion relationship. The number of people represented and the interests at stake are great, hence the field is highly partisan-spirited.

In contrast, the total of social protection service providing organisations to third parties seems to have managed to keep things at arm's length and maintain subtle balances among the various political areas. At the same time, though, their second degree organisation is still at substandard level. This lack of development of second degree organisational forms may be due to a series of factors mainly related with the question of who can undertake a relevant initiative and on which criteria. The earlier, more powerful and distinguished organisations have already well-established relationships with decision-making agents and have secured for themselves a series of informal privileges which probably they do not wish to re-negotiate. On the other hand, recent organisations do not have the prestige and the means as of yet that would allow them to lead a relevant effort successfully.

After all, all organisations are particularly sensitive to independence issues and strongly oppose anything that could be seen as a manipulation attempt. In addition, a large number of organisations reckon that they fulfil their role successfully and do not wish any changes, the moment that the operation of multiple networks and alliances creates the illusion of there being second degree bodies. Even in the case of will maturity for second degree organisation, though, the absence of relevant legislation and scientific documentation on the institution of common acceptance or rejection criteria still remains a complex technical problem. There is also concern, as aforesaid, on the criterion of granting voting rights to organisations. If rights are equal irrespective of the number of members, then there is the risk to create a large number of artificial few-member associations aiming at higher representation of a specific interest group (for example a union or a political party). In contrast, if votes are proportional to the number of members, there is the risk of registering a multitude of irrelevant individuals, something that would equally distort actual proportions. The contesting issues are multiplied in the case of the establishment of a confederation (that could for instance include federations of development, humanitarian, environmental and social organisations).

The above problems cannot be solved overnight. It takes a previous extensive dialogue, in a depth of time with the contribution of officers and members of the organisations themselves, the scientific community, the political world and state officers. At the same time, one could draw upon the experience of third countries which can be obtained both from secondary material (bills, by-laws and procedures) and primary one, with the participation in the dialogue of individuals from all lines that are actively involved at this level.

Implementation of element 13: the experience of each agent in influencing the development of social policy

The method social policy is organised and exercised in Greece is in itself a great issue for examination. The participation of non-government, non-state and non-public agents in decision-making processes is highly challenged. Some civil society organisations reckon that they influence the establishment of social policy. However, in most cases, the exercise of this influence is lim-

ited in organising conferences with the participation of political figures or officials from the European Union and public administration as official guests or guest speakers. In other cases, an informal communication among NGOs and decision-making bodies is established. In reality, this is a communication whereby interpersonal relationships play the dominant role. A small percentage of organisations participate in decision-making bodies either as opinion provider or materially (with voting rights). The Regional Entrepreneurial Programs (PEP) aim at the participation of representatives of relevant NGOs in respective Monitoring Committees⁷. In the Social Protection Committee of Law 3144/03 "Social dialogue for the promotion of employment and social protection and other provisions" an NGO representative participates with a two-year office term. In the administration of the under-establishment agent of social economy that will be called National Social Economy Agent (EFK0) and will be under the auspices of the Ministries of Labour, Development and Health and Social Welfare, the participation of banks, sponsors and volunteer organisations is provided. In various other points, there are provisions for the participation of individuals from NGOs in administrative bodies of agents related with social care. For instance, in the National Social Care Council there is the participation of a representative of the Greek Confederation of Disabled Persons (proposed by its Board of Directors), a representative of the private sector non-for-profit agents, the National System of Social Care (appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Welfare among individuals proposed by the agents) and one representative from volunteer organisations in the social care sector (also appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Welfare among individuals proposed by the agents) (L. 2646, article 8, paragraph 3)⁸. Also, in

7. PEP of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Implementation Provisions, page 145. We could not record cases where these provisions were implemented or ignored nor the selection processes for these representatives. It appears that among the 13 Regions there were variations; however, the step is positive.

8. The National Social Care Council is established with a decision of the Minister of Health and Social Welfare with the participation of the Social Welfare General Director of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, one representative from the Central Health Council, one representative from the Board of Directors of the National Social Care Organisation, one representative from the Ministries of National Economy, Labour and Social Security and Education and Religious Affairs (nominated by the respective Ministers), one representative

the Common Action of Health and Social Welfare Services Coordination Council (SYEDYPYP)⁹ there is the voting right participation of one representative of the National Confederation of Disabled Persons and the Presidents of two non-for-profit legal entities of private law specially accredited and appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Welfare among individuals proposed by these¹⁰ (L.2646, article 9, paragraph 2).

In the seven-member Greek Executive Cooperation Committee with UNICEF there is the participation of three representatives of agents, unions or NGOs whose actions aim at child protection. The Minister of Health and Social Welfare calls an invitation for the submission of relevant proposals and makes a selection among these¹¹ (L.4626/98, article 26, paragraph 1). In the seven-member Board of Directors of the Training and Rehabilitation Centre of Blind People

from the Greek Church, one representative from the Greek Prefecture Association (ENAE) nominated by its Board of Directors, one representative from first degree local administration organisations nominated by the Board of Directors of the Central Association of Greek Municipalities and Communities (KEDKE), one representative from the Higher Administration of the Unions of the Public Servants (ADEDY), one representative from the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) nominated by its Board of Directors, one representative of the Greek Industries Association (SEV) nominated by its Board of Directors, one social worker as representative of the Greek Social Workers Association (SKLE) nominated by its Board of Directors, one sociologist, one psychologist and one economist with high scientific expertise and knowledge in the field of social care appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Welfare and one representative from GESASE appointed by its Board of Directors.

9. This is a rename of the Health Services Common Action Coordination Council (SYSEDYPYP) of L. 2549/97 which gives opinion on the total development planning of social care services, the organisation, development and operation of social care service networks, the coordination of coalition negotiations among social care services and social security agents as well as among social security agents themselves and cost estimation of provided services by public and private agents.
10. In the Council meetings there is the participation, with voting right, of the Social Welfare General Secretary, the President of the National Social Care Council, the President and General Director of the Social Care Organisation and the Social Welfare General Director.
11. Other members are one officer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, proposed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, one officer from the Ministry of Economy proposed by the Minister of Economy and one officer from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare proposed by the Minister of Health and Social Welfare.

(KEAT) there is the participation of a representative of the Greek Blind People Association appointed by its Board of Directors¹². Finally, in the seven-member Board of Directors of the Greek Foundation for the Protection of Dumb-Mute People (EIPK) there is the participation of a representative of the Deaf People Federation appointed by its Board of Directors¹³ (paragraph 5). This is not the case though for the National Social Care Organisation¹⁴.

The National Confederation of Disabled Persons participates in decision-making bodies centres and represents people with disabilities in the dialogue with the Greek State. The Confederation prepares an action plan, exercises regular control on legislating regulations and provisions and submits proposals to the Greek State on issues such as education, vocational training, employment, information society and total intervention. The Confederation aims at the establishment of a national pilot framework for disabilities focusing on the promotion of its socio-political dimension. The Confederation promotes the rights of the disabled persons participating, among others, in the Monitoring Committee of the 3rd Common Framework Support 2000-2006, the Monitoring Committees of Sectoral Entrepreneurial Programs and Regional Entrepreneurial Programs, the Special Education Department of the Pedagogic Institute, the National Social Care Council, the National Council of Administra-

12. Other members are one economist, one eye-surgeon, a distinguished and credible individual and one officer from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Welfare, one officer from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs appointed by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs and one representative of the centre staff.

13. In the EIPK Board of Directors there is the participation of one economist, one eye-surgeon, a distinguished and credible individual and one officer from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Welfare, one officer from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs appointed by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs and one representative of the centre staff.

14. The Organisation is managed by a seven-member Board of Directors with an equal number of deputy members and is made up of the General Director of the Organisation, one member of an AEI Academic Research Staff or TEI academic faculty specialized in social sciences, one officer from the General Social Care Division, one elected representative of the organisation staff and three scientists of high-prestige or specialization or expertise in the sector of social care.

tive Reform, the first and second degree Committees of L.2643/98, the Board of Directors of the National Transplant Organisation, the Board of Directors of Recovery and Rehabilitation Organisations, Committees of Ministries and Project Management Teams related with disability. At a European level the National Confederation of Disabled Persons participates in the European Forum of Disabled Persons, which represents people with disabilities in the dialogue with the European Commission, the European Council, the European Union Council and other European authorities. The Confederation participates in a wide contact network with the National Councils of Disabled Persons of other member-states as well as of the under accession countries to the EU. It also participates in regional committees such as the South Europe Committee for disability aiming at strengthening the relations among the National Councils of Disabled Persons of the wider geopolitical area of the Mediterranean and the Balkans.

VII Conclusions

An indicator for the assessment of social dialogue and public consultation on poverty should include the following:

		Parameters	Notes
participants	1	the percentage of the population represented	the more individuals and social groups represented, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	2	the number of agents	the more the participating agents, the greater the benefit for the dialogue (risk of poor coordination after a certain point, though)
	3	the number and the origin distribution of the individuals represented by each agent	the more individuals and social groups represented, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	4	the management system of each agent	the better the representation of the demands of each organization's base, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	5	the independence of the agent	the more independent the agent, the more unbiased its claims, hence benefiting the dialogue
	6	the legalization of the agent's involvement in poverty issues	the better the substantiation of the agent's right to participate in the dialogue, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	7	the priority assigned to poverty issues by the agent	the higher the priority assigned to poverty treatment by the agents, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	8	the individual specialization on poverty issues	the more experience embedded in special poverty issues, the greater the benefit for the dialogue (risk of ineffectiveness after a certain point, though)
	9	the documented knowledge on poverty	the deeper and more documented knowledge on poverty the agents have, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	10	networking and experience of each agent	the better the networking among the agents, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	11	the experience of each agent in influencing the establishment of social policy	the higher the experience of the agents, the greater the benefit for the dialogue

*National Awareness Raising Actions
on Social Inclusion and Social Protection*

decisions	12	the participation and the number of agents-message recipients and decision-makers	the higher the participation of agents in a position to take political measures, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	13	the coordination of decision-making agents	the higher the coordination and the lower the bureaucracy among decision-making agents, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
processes	14	the establishment of a poverty observatory	if the observatory is established, the stronger its position, the greater the benefit for the dialogue (provided that its role remains strictly neutral)
	15	the stipulation of statutory commitments in International Conventions, the Constitution etc	the more and clearer the commitments at a statutory level, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	16	the authorization of representatives for dialogue participation	the higher the degree of authorization and the experience of the representatives, the greater the benefit for the dialogue (risk of arbitrariness after a certain point, though)
	17	the transfer of social dialogue to a regional level	the more decentralized the dialogue, the more effective it can be (on conditions)
	18	the acceptance of a common definition	the greater the consent on technical issues, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	19	the organization of special topic events	the more individual special topic public consultation events are organized, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	20	the establishment of a specific agenda	the more specific the agenda, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
	21	the establishment of a timetable	the more detailed the timetable, the greater the benefit for the dialogue
environment	22	monitoring the phenomenon	the preparation of a reliable annual report on poverty benefits the dialogue
	23	the poverty phenomenon intensity	a slight increase of poverty problems may revive the dialogue, a high increase entails polarization and conflict
	24	the support of research on poverty	the research support benefits the dialogue
	25	the support of education and training on poverty	the support of education on the phenomenon of poverty benefits the dialogue

From the implementation of the indicator on contemporary Greek standards the following arise:

As regards the general environment, it appears that the poverty incident is developing in Greece and it is rather intense already so as to require a more comprehensive and systematic treatment. However, it is not so intense as to cause social unrest or an extremely polarized and conflicting social dialogue. The overall education on poverty issues is satisfactory but needs further support. Considerable work is conducted at research level on poverty but there is still room for further development.

As regards the social dialogue and public consultation processes on dealing with the poverty incidence, it is commonly understood that they are non-existent. Besides, there is a general lack of public consultation processes in Greece. What is needed is the organization of a large-scale public consultation opening event and the institution of its periodic recurrence, the organization of the dialogue in individual modules and in a regional scale, the establishment of a specific social dialogue agenda, the preparation of a specific timetable and the common acceptance of the technical specifications of the dialogue.

As regards the outcome of social dialogue and public consultation, that is, the adoption of specific measures, for the time being we can only make assumptions. In the one, it is deemed proper to have the participation of various public agents in the dialogue who are in a position to implement the proposed measures. This is so because poverty cannot be combated with benefits only but rather with a set of measures (employment policies, health and education provisions, transfer facilitation, tax policies etc) in whose implementation many different ministries and dozens of individual offices may be involved. On the other hand, the most universal representation possible of these offices is required so that the dialogue remains effective and the implementation of measures is not hindered by bureaucratic inflexibilities.

The only good news comes from candidate agents for participation in social dialogue and public consultation processes on poverty in Greece. The country has a large number of collective agents with all those characteristics initially considered desirable for social dialogue and public consultation, namely they

represent a large part of the population and many individual social groups, they have democratic administrations and high accountability, they are statutory and financially independent and are experienced in cooperation and networking. The main negative point is the fact that most agents lack sufficient knowledge on poverty issues and also they place its combat very low on their priorities. Greece also has significant independent research agents who could play the role of consultant and neutral observer and facilitate the dialogue at a technical level.

At a technical level, the indicator is designed in such a way so as to be easily adjustable for the recording of social dialogue and public consultation at an individual agent level and/ or specific policy areas. For example, let us see which individual components of the indicator we would examine if we wanted to identify the degree to which a Local Administration Organisation (let us suppose a municipality) that exercises social policy is open to stimuli for public consultation on poverty from its citizens:

1. The official pledge (Municipal Board decision) of the Municipality for
 - establishment of public consultation processes,
 - recourse blocking (for administration and implementation of consultation),
 - adoption and implementation of the consultation results
2. Consensus or strong majority on the above
3. Publicity of public consultation:
 - is there an open invitation to the citizens to participate in the processes?
 - are the objective, the timetable, the place and method of consultation clear?
 - are the socially excluded citizens receiving the message, and if yes do they understand it?
4. Assignment of the public consultation performance to a specific office of a Municipality

5. Education, training and information of this office staff on consultation, starting from its strategic goal and ending at all technical and administrative details
6. Ensuring hardware resources for the proper administration operation of
 - premises
 - computer systems
 - printing systems
 - telephones etc
7. The development of a constant information network using the appropriate tools of modern marketing (poster, Media etc)
8. The announcement of a telephone number whereby a properly trained officer can answer to any possible question
9. The collection and public distribution of all qualitative and quantitative data on the poverty incidence within the municipal limits
10. The provision of pluralistic education on public consultation and poverty to those concerned
11. The encouragement of submitting introductory ideas and proposals
12. The adoption of good ideas and proposals
13. The organisation of consecutive (in each occasion) meetings, where
 - those concerned decide together on the processes of further consultation and the timetable of the following actions
 - the participation of all is technically facilitated (transfer to/ from the consultation site, strict observance of timetables, child care provision during the consultation hours etc)
14. Ensuring equal or proportional time for all and keeping minutes
15. Ensuring sufficient time for the submission of written proposals
16. Transparency in relevant decision-making

17. Transparency in the policy pilot implementation
18. The following publication of the consultation results and the policies implementation
19. The participation of individuals and/ or collective agents
20. The establishment of an open agents registry with specific, generally accepted and clear criteria
21. As regards the agents, we examine:
 - their number
 - their subject pluralism
 - the number and origin distribution of the individuals represented by each agent
 - the management system of each agent
 - the method and authorization degree of representatives
 - the agent's independence
 - the legalization of the agent's involvement in poverty issues
 - the priority assigned to poverty issues by each agent
 - the individual specialization on poverty issues
 - the substantiated knowledge on poverty
 - the agent's networking and experience
 - the experience of each agent in influencing the establishment of social police

Furthermore, the Indicator, with small modifications, may be applied in other fields of social policy (employment, health, hygiene and job safety, immigration, education, environment etc). It should be stressed though that the Indicator is merely a tool and as all tools, its final contribution to the goal for which it was developed directly depends on the intention, the will and ability of the users.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Greek

Venieris, D. (2004): Decomposition and Reconstruction of Social Policy: The Greek Experience. In D. Venieris and C. Papatheodorou (editing): *The Social Policy in Greece: Challenges and Prospects*. Athens: Ellinika Grammata pp 41-88

ESYE (2006) Press Release- A study on income and living conditions of households 2004, Athens: General Secretariat of National Statistical Service of Greece

Katrougalos, G. (2004) *Social Protection Institutions and Systems in the Modern World*. Athens: An. N. Sakkoulas.

Matsagganis, M. (2004): The Pendular Reform: The Social State and Society Modernization. In D. Venieris and C. Papatheodorou, (editing): *The Social Policy in Greece: Challenges and Prospects*. Athens: Ellinika Grammata pp 133-68.

Mitrakos, Th. & Tsakloglou, P. (1998). "Studies of financial inequalities in Greece", in *Social Inequalities and Social Exclusion*, 6th Scientific Conference of Sakis Karagiorgas Foundation. Athens: Sakis Karagiorgas Foundation pp 411-444.

Mitrakos, Th. And Tsakloglou, P. (2003) "Social Inequalities and Poverty in Greece", in D. Venieris and C. Papatheodorou (editing): *The Social Policy in Greece: Challenges and Prospects*. Athens: Ellinika Grammata.

Papatheodorou, C. (2004) Concept and Methodology Issues in Measuring Economic Inequality: What is the Effect of Alternative Acknowledgments and Interpretations: in M. Petmesidou and C. Papatheodorou (ed) *Poverty and Social Exclusion*. Athens: Exantas pp 159-201.

Papatheodorou, C. (2006) *Poverty and Social Protection in Greece and the European Union at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Comparisons and Trends*, Minutes of International Conference "Social Policy in a Changing Environment: Challenges and Prospects", Athens: Panteio University of Social and Political Science.

Papatheodorou, C. and Petmesidou, M. (2004a) Inequality, Poverty and Re-allocation through Social Transfer: Greece in a Comparative Perspective, in M. Permezidou and C. Papatheodorou (ed) Poverty and Social Exclusion. Athens: Exantas, pp 307-366

Papatheodorou, C and Petmesidou, M. (2005) Inequality, Reallocation in Prosperous Regimes: Greece in Comparison with other EU Countries. In G. Argeitis (editing) Economic Changes and Social Contrasts in Greece: The Challenges at the Beginning of the 21st Century, Athens: Tipothito- George Dardanos, pp. 213-254

Petmesidou, M. (2003): Considerations on Social Reform. In D, Venieris and C. pp 483-511

Papatheodorou, (editing): The Social Policy in Greece. Challenges and Prospects. Athens: Ellinika Grammata

Petmesidou, M. (1998): Social Classes and Social Reproduction Process. Athens: Exantas.

Foreign

Atkinson, A B. (1983). The Economics of Inequality, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Atkinson, A.B. (1989) Poverty. In J. Eatwell, M. Milgate and P. Newman (eds) Social Economics. The New Palgrave, London: Macmillan, pp 204-214

Atkinson, A.B. (1998) Poverty in Europe. Oxford: Blackwell

Alcock, P. (1993) Understanding Poverty. London: Macmillan

Gordon, D. and Townsend, P. (Eds) (2000) Breadline Europe; The Measurement of Poverty. Bristol: Policy Press.

Guio, A.-C. (2005) Income Poverty and Social Exclusion in the EU25. Statistics in Focus, Population and Social Condition, Eurostat.

Dennis, I & Guio, A.-C. (2004) Poverty and Social Exclusion in the EU. Statistics in Focus, Population and Social Conditions, Eurostat.

Eurostat (2002) European Social Statistics. Income, Poverty and Social Exclusion: 2nd Report. Luxembourg: European Commission.

Papatheodorou, C. (2005) Child Poverty and Social Protection in Greece: What the Evidence Shows. Paper presented at WELLCHI Network – Workshop 4, Children in Multicultural Societies, National Centre for Social Research (EKKE), Athens.

Papatheodorou C. and Petmesidou, M. (2006) Poverty profiles and trends. How do Southern European Countries Compare with Each Other? In M. Petmesidou and C. Papatheodorou (Eds) Poverty and Social Deprivation in the Mediterranean Area: Trends, policies and welfare prospects in the new millennium. London: Zed Books, pp. 47-94.

Petmesidou, M. (1996). Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus: Poverty Research in a Policy Vacuum, in E. Oyen, S.M. Miller & S. Abdus Samad (eds), Poverty: A Global Review. Oslo:Scandinavian University Press.

Petmesidou, M. (1991): Statism, Social Policy and the Middle Classes in Greece. *Journal of European Social Policy*,91 1 (1), pp 31-48

Piachaud, D. (1987) Problems in the Definition and Measurement of Poverty. *Journal of Social Policy*, 16(2): 147-164

Piachaud, D. (1993). The definition and measurement of poverty and inequality. In N. Barr and D. Whynes (eds), *Current Issues in the Economics of Welfare*. London: Macmillan, pp. 105-129

Ringen, S. (1988) Direct and Indirect measures of Poverty. *Journal of Social Policy*, 17(3): 351-367.

Robolis, S. Papadogamvros, V. Dimoulas, K. Sidira, V. (1995): *The Role of Partnerships in Promoting Social Cohesion: Greek National Study*. Athens: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

Ruggles, P. (1990). *Drawing the Line; Alternative Poverty Measures and their Implications for Public Policy*. Washington: The Urban Institute Press.

Tsakoglou, P. (2000) "Poverty and Antipoverty Policies in Greece and a

Comparison with Other Mediterranean EU Member States", in A. Mitsos and E. Mossialos (Eds) *Contemporary Greece and Europe*, Aldershot: Ashgate pp 331-335

Tsakloglou, P. and Mitrakos, Th. (2006) "Inequality and Poverty in the Last Quarter of the 20th Century" in M. Petmesidou and E. Mossialos (Eds) *Social Policy Developments in Greece*, Aldershot: Ashgate pp 126-143

Townsend, P. (1979). *Poverty in the United Kingdom*. Middlesex: Penguin.

Townsend, P. (1993) *The International Analysis of Poverty*. London: Harvest-Wheatsheaf.

APPENDIX

The Questionnaire

12. Where does the agent's knowledge on poverty come from and how is its opinion on current developments on poverty issues established?

Indicator for Participation in Social Dialogue against Poverty (IPSDP)

1. Agent's Name	
2. Legal Form	
3. How many individual organizations do you represent?	
4. How many members (persons) do you represent in total?	

5. If you have members (persons) to what percentage (approximately if you do not know exactly) do these belong to the following categories?

men		women	
-----	--	-------	--

under 18		18 to 39		40 to 64		over 65	
----------	--	----------	--	----------	--	---------	--

from Attica		from a prefecture capital		from rural areas	
-------------	--	---------------------------	--	------------------	--

employees-workers		self-employed (not farmers)		farmers	elderly and child care providers	
other:						

No preliminary education		Primary/ Secondary School Graduates		High School Graduates		Higher Education Graduates	
--------------------------	--	-------------------------------------	--	-----------------------	--	----------------------------	--

6. How is the administration body established?

with elections			
direct appointment pursuant to statutes			
other:			
are there political party groups?	yes	no	
do your members come from the entire political spectrum?	yes	no	

7. How is the involvement of your agent in poverty issues documented/ legalized?

statutory provisions	
provisioned in other decisions (General Assembly, Board of Directors etc)	
arises from participation in statutory bodies related with poverty	
other (specify):	

8. Is fighting poverty a main priority of your agent?

Yes		no	
-----	--	----	--

9. If no, what priority rank does it have compared to other major issues?

2 nd place		3 rd place		4 th and beyond	
-----------------------	--	-----------------------	--	----------------------------	--

10. Do you use a specific definition to determine poverty and the poor?

yes		no	
-----	--	----	--

If yes, what is this definition? (on which criteria is a person or a household defined as poor?)

11. Which poverty category do you focus on?

general poverty	
workers	
women	
unemployed	
children (up to 16 years)	
youth (16-25)	
elderly (65 +)	
disabled people	
immigrants	
farmers	
other:	

12. Where does the agent's knowledge on poverty come from and how is its opinion on current developments on poverty issues established?

experience	
the Media	
Internet	
participation in scientific and other events	
scientific journals	
databases	
Other:	

13. Does the agent cooperate with scientific personnel specializing on poverty issues?

yes		no	
-----	--	----	--

14. Is the opinion of the poor themselves taken into account?

yes		no	
-----	--	----	--

If yes, how?

15. How do you influence policy establishment about poverty?

organization of relevant conferences, meetings etc	
pparticipation in decision-making bodies (with voting rights)	
pparticipation in administrating bodies of legal entities (organizations, agents etc) participating in another capacity in decision-making bodies	
pparticipating in decision-making bodies as opinion experts	
ppublic expression of alternative proposals, criticism or protest	
exerting pressure through the mobilization of a sufficient number of citizens	
conducting special research and publication of results	
development of informal communication with decision-making bodies	
eeerting indirect pressure due to strong bonds with a political party or personality through the Media	
various publications	
activism actions	
other:	

*National Awareness Raising Actions
on Social Inclusion and Social Protection*

16. At which level do you influence/ establish this policy?

local		regional		national	
-------	--	----------	--	----------	--

**17. What is your relationship with each one of the following agents on poverty issues?
(in case of no relationship, leave blank)**

	negotiation	consultation	information
Ministry of Labor and Social Security			
Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity			
Ministry of Economy and Finance			
Ministry of Development			
National Statistical Service of Greece			
Central Association of Greek Municipalities and Communities			
Association of Prefecture Administrations			
The Greek Church			
National Confederation of Disabled Persons			
General Confederation of Greek Workers			
Hellenic Federation of Enterprises			
Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants			
Greek Confederation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations			
National Confederation of Greek Trade			
Local Administration Organizations			
Greek Manpower Employment Organization			
Greek Network Against Poverty			

18. In your opinion, which other agents could contribute to social dialogue or public consultation on poverty in Greece? What is your relationship with them?

	negotiation	consultation	information

*National Awareness Raising Actions
on Social Inclusion and Social Protection*

19. What events (conferences, activism, consultations) on poverty did you organize in the past 24 months?

20. Have you participated in the establishment of national action plans on social inclusion?

yes		no	
-----	--	----	--

How?

21. In which events on poverty did you participate in Greece and abroad?

Type	Title	Organizing body	Country	Year

How would you assess the above events?

22. In your opinion, has the social dialogue on poverty started in Greece?

yes
With which event or series of events?

No
Who is mainly responsible for the launch?

*National Awareness Raising Actions
on Social Inclusion and Social Protection*

23. To what degree do you consider the following factors important in the establishment of social dialogue and public consultation on poverty in Greece?

	little ←————→ much				
	1	2	3	4	5
the number of participating agents in the dialogue					
the percentage of the population represented					
the representation of people of all ages					
the representation of the poor					
the representation of both genders					
the representation of individuals from all political parties					
the representation of individuals from all country regions					
The representation of individuals/ organizations from the following groups:					
disabled					
unemployed					
repatriated					
immigrants/ refugees					
elderly					
workers					
youth					
farmers					
other:					
the acceptance of common scientific standards in identifying poverty					
the support of scientific research on poverty					
the organization of a national scale opening consultation event					
the organization of special topic events (female poverty, poor workers etc)					
the establishment of a poverty monitor station					
the frequency of relevant events organization					
the utilization of international experience and practice					
the development of social awareness methods on poverty					

*National Awareness Raising Actions
on Social Inclusion and Social Protection*

the stipulation of commitments against poverty in national level					
in the Constitution					
in legislation					
in special documents (codes, charts, etc)					
the stipulation of commitments in supranational level					
the commitment of social partners in the implementation of these stipulations					
the establishment of a social dialogue agenda on poverty					
the establishment of a timetable for the implementation of the agenda					
the appointment of one single (public) agent as coordinator					
the establishment of databases- information systems- data sharing systems					
the training and education of staff on social dialogue/ poverty issues					
raising transparency and accountability of dialogue agents					
the preparation of an annual report on poverty					
the preparation of a comparative report with other member-states of the E.U.					

24. Which other action could facilitate/ enhance social dialogue on poverty?

ISBN: 978 - 960 - 7402 - 39 - 4

Copyright ΙΝΕ/ΓΣΕΕ-ΑΔΕΔΥ

Ιουλιανού 24, 104 34 Αθήνα

Τηλ.: 210 82 02 247, 210 82 02 239

Σελιδοποίηση - Εκτύπωση:

ΚΑΜΠΥΛΗ ADV.

Αντιγόνης 60 & Λένορμαν

Τηλ.: 210 5156820, Fax: 210 5156811

e-mail: info@kambili.gr

ISBN: 978 - 960 - 7402 - 39 - 4



Project leader: development and education
center "European perspective"



The program is financed
by the European social fund