
Update No. 8 – December 8, 2000

The State, Public Services and Social Cohesion

Résumés

École Nationale d'Administration, 2000. "The Fight Against Exclusion and Inter-Ministry Coordination at the Local Level." Seminar on Comparative Administration, Class of 1998-2001. Paris: <http://www.ena.fr/F/sg/semin/ac00/exclusions/anglais.htm>

This paper is the result of research by students at the École Nationale d'Administration (ÉNA), which seeks to assess the governance arrangements and coordination mechanisms that are being put into place following the adoption of the Law Against Social Exclusion voted in by the National Assembly in July 1998. France was the first country to institute a global approach based on the concept of social exclusion - a concept that emerged as a result of the appearance of new forms of social dislocation, characterized by a wide range of difficulties and the breaking of links with the rest of society. But developing policies aimed at providing a global response to the problems of the worst-off members of society raises a number of problems, notably how to keep the action of the state close to the population.

Most of the policies used to tackle social exclusion are formulated by the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs and are, to a large extent, implemented on the ground by the local state services grouped around the Prefects. The large number of actors involved in these policies is leading to greater coordination of action at the local level. The report identifies three areas for improvement. First, the central administration finds it difficult to put the needs of those suffering from social exclusion at the heart of policy implementation. Second, relations between different stakeholders are still badly coordinated and poorly organized. Third, the weakness of inter-ministry coordination at the central and local levels is a further obstacle to the efficient implementation of public policy.

Public Service Commission of Canada, 1997. "Canada 2005: Implications for the Public Service." Ottawa: http://www.jobs.gc.ca/prcb/rd/hrsystem/2005_e.htm

This paper was prepared by the Public Service Commission of Canada, (PSC) as part of the "Canada 2005" initiative launched by Ottawa in 1997, which subsequently provided much of the

stimulus for the social cohesion discussion that now takes place in many sectors of Canadian society. In this paper, the PSC looks at how public service institutions are affected by changes in the nature of social cohesion. For the PSC, rebuilding the legitimacy of the public sector will require a new approach to citizens. The public service of tomorrow will require public managers with a global perspective and the ability to integrate national needs and global priorities. Greater emphasis on civic engagement and on building social capital will require mindsets and skills with a focus on inclusiveness and on valuing diversity in the workplace and in program delivery.

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1997.

"Local Partnership: A Successful Strategy for Social Cohesion?" You can access it at:

<http://www.eurofound.ie/publications/social/2223.htm>

This study offers a summary of the main conclusions and results from a European-wide research project on the role of local partnerships in promoting social cohesion. Eighty-six local partnerships were documented, reflecting a range of partnerships. The goal of partnerships has been to harness the energy, skills and resources of key actors - public sector agencies, employers, trade unions, voluntary organizations and local community groups - in developing and implementing local strategies to combat unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Trends to decentralize functions from the State to local authorities and to develop a mixed market in social service provision has contributed to the growth of local partnership approaches. National, regional and local public authorities and agencies play a leading role in local partnerships, reflecting their responsibilities for social service provision and expenditure, and the development of local infrastructure. The involvement of employers and trade unions is predominantly found where partnerships are concerned with employment and local economic issues. Frequently, local community interests and excluded groups are not directly represented.

What's New?

Nexus is very happy to inform you that it is no longer alone in the world of electronic newsletters that deal with social cohesion-related issues. Yes, Nexus now has an European "cousin" named "Social Cohesion: Developments." Through the electronic publication of "Developments" (three times a year), the Council of Europe will inform the interested public about the progress made and the activities carried out in the field of social cohesion in Europe. The first issue appeared in November 2000. You can access it at:

<http://www.coe.fr/DASE/EN/cohesion/strategy/devunit.htm>

On September 7-9, 2000, a major conference on the theme of "Diversity and Cohesion" took place in Namur and Brussels. The Conference was launched with a report, prefaced by President Vaclav Havel, entitled "Diversity and Cohesion: Challenges for the Integration of Immigrants and Minorities." To get more information about the report, contact Maria Ochoa-Llido at the Council of Europe: maria.ochoa-llido@coe.int

The next edition of Nexus will be released January 5, 2001. Seasons greetings to all our readers!