



“Multiple barriers, multiple solutions:

Inclusion into and through employment for people who are homeless in Europe”

Questionnaire for FEANTSA Annual Theme
Portuguese National Report

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Elaboration of the Document: SAOM

Coordination and Redaction: SAOM

Cooperating Institutions: AMI, ACISJF, Misericórdia de Lisboa, Movimento ao Serviço da Vida, SAOM, Serviço Jesuíta aos Refugiados

June 2007

The Social Security Institute (I.P.) carried out several studies, throughout 2004 and 2005, with the intention of having a better approach on the reality of the homeless people in Portugal. These studies were supported by concrete data and allowed the Institute, through the diagnosis of their combined information, to define strategies for the development of measures which could promote skill formation and the integration of this public in the active labour force. We will take these studies as the guideline for this report, especially in what concerns all the quantitative data (being that they are the only existing studies at national level). We will also use (and analyse) the proposed and implemented politics and measures, given the responsibilities of this institution.

Concerning the *rooflessness*, in accordance with the study conducted by the Social Security Institute in 2005, from a sample universe of 467 individuals ranging all regions of the country, we verify that in the two previous years at least 73% experienced a situation of unemployment. Of these numbers, 44% had been in an unemployment situation more than once, and 27% working in precarious and unstable situations (seasonal or rotational work). 85% of the inquired population never benefited from the unemployment subsidy and only a number of 2% received or receives that installment. In their prior employment situation, 87% stated to be working on full time jobs, 37% of them without a contract. This segment of our population is, therefore, unemployed and economically inactive (34% do not look for a job). They live by and depend on parallel economy, precarious and illegal work and consequently without any benefits from the Social Services. Many of these jobs are offered in Cleaning Services, Construction and in the Hotel and Restaurant industry. At this date, only 11% were immigrants and working.

In the other three categories considered by ETHOS typology, unemployment is also a dominant scenario¹. In the case of the *houselessness* (subject of re-integration services) and the living in *insecure* or *inadequate housing*, more individuals are integrated in skill formation and professional qualification², others are inserted in competence validation programs, or attending Day-Care centers. In SAOM, elderly people (most of them in the third or the fourth group) share space and activities with the homeless (first and second group mostly). We have found out this to be a good practice since it inspires positive results in both groups. They trade experiences and affections, and improve each other's self-esteem. For these segments (second, third and fourth group) of the population there is also some offer of occupational activities³ like training or formation in a professional context⁴.

There are still those who, despite having fulltime jobs, keep living in hostels or shelter homes because they do not have the financial capacity to rent a flat, due to the very low incomes, the inflated rental fees, the need for a bailer and the payment of two months in advance. The existence of many monoparental families aggravates the precariousness of these groups living conditions, where temporary and precarious work is the rule.

1 According to SAOM, in 2006, 70% were in this situation for over four years); AMI, 2006, 89%

2 SAOM Project "Dar Sentido à Vida", 17%; AMI, 2006, 28%

3 Espaço T, Centro de Dia da Vila Nova, CAIS, AMI, Misericórdia de Lisboa, Centro Comunitário de Nossa Senhora da Boa Viagem, Espaço Raíz

4 17% of the population of "Dar Sentido à Vida" (SAOM); program VER (Coração da Cidade) based in voluntary work, deals with professional, social and personal abilities and competences. SAOM has two elements of this project integrated in its structure. They provide assistance to the elderly in exchange for housing and a small dole. ACISJF also integrates young homeless in the domiciles of elder people in exchange for nocturnal assistance.

Most of the illegal immigrants do not have access, neither to the work market nor to the reinsertion programs. Some find solutions in the parallel market⁵, where abuse and exploitation are too common.

In what concerns the native Portuguese, the search for work tends to happen only when there is an institutional guidance and support. The inexistence of adequate intervention plans, adaptable to their individual situation, the fact that they ceded to a situation where they depend exclusively on the RSI (dole) combined with the lack of attractive wages⁶ and jobs for unskilled⁷ workers creates a situation where just 20% are enrolled in the Institute for Work and Professional Education (IEFP) and only 37%⁸ stated that they were searching work. This condition can also be explained by a disaffection provoked by the lack of access (and possibility of access) to information, both due to the lack of skills (illiteracy) and the bureaucratic nature of the system.

The situation is manifestly different when foreign homeless are concerned. Most of them actively search for work, being that that was the objective of their migration. They are often ashamed of not being able to send money to their families and refuse to go back "empty-handed". Work increases their self-esteem and helps them to organize their lives. It often happens it turns into an obsession when false hopes are engendered (on the continuity of a job, for example) and they are repeatedly abused due to their illegal condition and/or personal limitations. Those who do not suffer from psychiatric conditions or drug and alcohol abuse are generally persistent and highly motivated, but being without papers frustrates all their efforts.

In order to better understand this socio-economic reality, we will present now some indicators about the evolution of unemployment in Portugal, during the last decade.

According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE) (2002), between 1998 and 2002, unemployment increased, with more expression in the active population between 15 and 34 years old. The real growth of the minimum wage has been diminishing since 1999. Still according to same source (2004), unemployment was placed in 6.7%, 0,4 percentile points over the registered in 2003. When women are concerned, these numbers are always higher.

We would like to point out the low economic growth (1.3%), the increase of inflation (2.4%) and that, according to data of the International Monetary Fund, Portugal is diverging from the EU average growth for the 7th consecutive year.

According to data published by INE (2005) in comparison with the previous year, regarding employed individuals, we witnessed both an increase of contracts without term (0.9%) and with term (2.7%). Comparing 2004 and 2005 we verify that the activity rate is maintained (5.2%) and the unemployment rate increases from 6.7% to 7.6%. The variation of the unemployed population balances from (thousands) 365.0 to 422.3 and the one of the employed population from 5122.8 to 5122.6.

In the last quarter of 2006 eight percent of the population was unemployed (INE). This increase of numbers results both from the growth of the active population and from the loss of job offer. Analysing

5 Gypsies (mostly Roma) often employ Eastern Europe immigrants as aid, mainly to transport and sell goods. They are paid by the hour or by the day. They often find seasonal work in agricultural tasks and in civil construction.

6 The minimum wage is set to 403,00 €

7 Illiteracy: According to ISS, I.P. (2005), 37% only completed basic instruction. SAOM (2006): 57,7%. AMI (2006): 34%

8 According to ISS, I.P. (2005)

the numbers by gender, we see a similar increase of unemployment in both cases but women keep being the most affected (9.2% against 7%). Alentejo, Lisbon and the North Region show the highest indicators. Most new unemployment situations derive from the industry, civil construction, energy and water sectors.

By the end of January 2007 the unemployment situation, by registration time and age group was the following:

- North Regional Direction (DRN) – total: 200244; 52.7% of them registered during the previous year, 47.3% are registered for a period of over a year. The most affected age group is the one comprehended between the 35 and 54 years old (43.6%).
- Centre Regional Direction (DRC) – total: 66585; 66.3% under one year, 33.7% over one year, being the biggest record in the 35-54 age group (39.4%).
- Lisbon and Tejo Valley Regional Direction (DRL) – total: 136970; 69.2% under one year, 30.8% over one year. The largest group remains the 35-54 with a incidence of 38.7%
- Algarve Regional Direction (DRA) – total: 16480; 82.3% less than one year, 17.7%. Largest incidence remains in the same group (42.3%).
- Açores Autonomous Direction (DAA) – total: 4349; 71.3% against 28.7%. 37% of which between the 35 and the 54 years old.
- Madeira Autonomous Direction (DAM) – total: 8895; 68.5% against 31.5%. 42.7% in the 35-54 years old group.

At the end of this same month the total sum of unemployed persons applying for a job through the social services was 457634. This number represents 87.5% of the calculated total job applications nationwide.

As a direct consequence of these conditions, the integration of the homeless in the work market and in society is very difficult. To these obstacles we add the specifics of this group, namely their appearance (premature aging, lack of teeth, vision problems, and clothing), physical condition (skin diseases are quite common), addictions⁹, mental illnesses¹⁰, infectious diseases¹¹, low education, insufficient professional skills, lack of lodging conditions, absence of future perspectives and social and/or familial networks¹².

Considering gender issues, we believe it is easier for women living in these circumstances to be integrated in the work market. The work in private houses is a good example, since it is a position which protects them from the Migration and Labour regulation services, both in the case of illegal emigrants and/or simple illegal work. Despite of being a precarious situation it is often enough a pull to get them out of the street. Women suffering from drug addiction can fall into prostitution, also this allows them to get out of the street, but they then fall in a position where they are vulnerable to other risks and forms of abuse¹³.

Concerning the obstacles fencing these groups from the work market, they seem to affect all individuals in a similar way regardless where we place them according ETHOS typology, even if it is always more acute in the case of the *rooflessness*. With a minimal education and depreciating what school could offer them, low qualifications and familial problems the insertion in a professional activity is extremely difficult.

9 ISS, I.P., 2005, **49%** stated to suffer from addiction from alcohol and/or other drugs; AMI, 2006, **28%**; SAOM, 2006, **52%**.

10 ISS, I.P., 2005, **4%**.

11 ISS, I.P., 2005, **7%** e **4%** suffering from chronic conditions; SAOM, 2006, **15,7%**.

12 SAOM, 2006, only **12%** state to have a social and/or familial network.

13 Due to the extreme complexity of these situations, we exclude here the cases of the women entering Portugal through the slave traffic networks.

What we believe to be a possibility in order to turn this challenge into a success is the “design of an adequate intervention, based on a reflection that takes into consideration not only the level of skills and formation of the person, but also individual characteristics (like health problems) which pose supplementary difficulties to maintaining a professional activity.”¹⁴ The same study we quote here states that this subject is not formed by an homogenous population and thus the response differentiation is a fundamental mechanism in attaining the aim of professional integration. The formation programs cannot be standard, instead they should be flexible and taking in account a vast range of problems and even the possibility of set backs. “Therefore, we have to take in account the profile of each individual throughout the processes of occupational programs and formation and insertion plans. This demands flexibility, both in what concerns options and methodologies.”¹⁵

We count on some institutions which promote “protected work” and the maintenance of occupational ateliers (Misericórdia de Lisboa, CAIS). However, this offer does not cover all the cases it should and it is insufficient. Our statistical data shows there are much more persons in this condition, suffering from pathologies and behavioural problems that end up inhibiting a successful reintegration, than there are places in these programs.

Where health is concerned, some of the difficulties for a positive integration in the work market, are related to the fact that there is strong incidence of cases of individuals addicted to drugs or/and alcohol, mental illnesses or personality disorders. These facts tend to be generalized and used as a prejudice against the whole group.

33% of the homeless persons inquired in the study conducted by ISS, I.P. (2005) have declared to suffer from chronic disease, contagious infectious illnesses and/or physical handicaps, elements that alone are strong obstacles to most attempts of professional integration.

In Portugal there is a strong incidence of tuberculosis (there are no precise data), proportionally these numbers are inflated when we look only to these populations because of the low conditions of hygiene, salubrity, the lack of suitable alimentation and the difficulties of treating such cases when the patient does not have proper housing.

The need for treatment of different health problems, occurring frequently in this group, hampers the assiduity in the job, constituting, by itself, a risk of contract rescission.

Obstacles related to the housing problem start in the high prices of the leases when compared to the wages. Unfit habitation (specially in the bigger cities) aggravated by the inexistence of governmental programs to stimulate the owners to modify this situation. Overcrowded houses or places with negative connotations (like some social housing neighbourhoods) are also factors of discrimination when we attempt professional integration. Having no information and no support in opening a bank account is also another negative point when we think of possibilities for integration.

The institutions and pensions that lodge this population do not practise flexible schedules that could favour their insertion and maintenance in the work market. Organizations that receive women and people with mental disorders are scarce. In our country there are no adjusted responses for this last group.

14 Estudo dos Sem-Abrigo (Homeless Study), ISS, IP, 2006: 201

15 Estudo dos Sem-Abrigo (Homeless Study), ISS, IP, 2005:133

The high cost of public transports, the lack of driving licences and the lack of proper transport are a limitation for admittance in some jobs.

Low academic competences and frail professional skills are the main factors hindering the possibility of admittance in attractive jobs. In spite of the existence of some programs that aim the development of personal and professional competences they do not exist in sufficient numbers in order to offer to these populations enough tools for a successful integration. In the specific case of immigrants language is yet another barrier.

Information about job opportunities can be found in cafes that have newspapers available for clients, but consumption is obligatory, keeping these persons away from it. The diffusion of this information is also made by the institutions working with these persons and the teams working on the field are often informed about the work market (Misericórdia de Lisboa, Caritas, Legião da Boa-Vontade, Cruz Vermelha). Internet is still not an easy option, even if some institutions already offer it in their grounds (Câmara Municipal do Porto, Espaço T, CAIS, SAOM). Most of the homeless in Portugal uses a mobile phone as a means of communication.

The careless physical appearance, the personal hygiene, clothes, lack of dentition, vision problems, aged aspect and the negative and stereotyped representation of this group are factors keeping them from being contracted by employers.

Inadequate and chaotic life styles, lack of abilities (a very common example is the lack of ability in managing money), the existence of debts, absence of economic capacity¹⁶, the lack of a social network¹⁷, existence of familial and judicial problems¹⁸, behavioural problems, (4%, ISS, I.P., 2005), domestic violence, questions of hygiene, lack of articulation between the social and the professional networks, long term unemployment (22%, ISS, I.P., 2005) and of lack of experience of work (6% never worked, according to the study of the ISS, I.P., 2005), are all personal problematics which pose obstacles to a professional integration.

Where immigration is concerned, we should stress the discrimination factor against Africans. Many employers of domestic staff prefer women of countries of the East the ones of the African countries.

In relation to the existing services they do not seem most adequate, for they provide little diversity face to the different levels of progress towards autonomy. The variety of intra and inter-individual relations is not taken in account. The ones that exist generally combine rigid rules and schedules, lowly skilled technicians, both academically and professionally and low expectations of the personnel concerning the effectiveness of their intervention.

In Portugal, the extreme bureaucratization of all public services demotivates the homeless and the low wages produce a negative effect, inducing accommodation to the dole provided by the social services and to the support of the institutions on the field. According to data provided by INE, 21% of the Portuguese population is in a situation of relative poverty and from these, 12% in persistent poverty.

16 58% work in an irregular basis and 72% have never received the RSI, ISS, I.P., 2005.

17 Direct family is still the support of a large number of individuals, in spite of the fact that this support is rarely continuous; 13% of the inquired in the study of the homeless stated that their pairs were the people they could better relate to.

18 25% state that familial problems lead them to the homeless condition, 70% state they do not have familiar structure, ISS, I.P., 2005

Thus, to have a work is not guarantees of economic sufficiency. The value of the minimum wage (403,00€) is not attractive for a population that has to face the market prices and can benefit from aids superior to that value.

Some citizens, even if they have remunerated work, keep themselves in a homeless situation, because of the low wages insufficient to support the rental of a flat. There are no political measures directed to these individuals, which could help them to support current expenses like rent, water and electricity. The purchase of habitation by loan implies a job contract and the bureaucratization for this process is immense. We still have to stress out the negative stereotype carried by this group, many times denying its elements the basic principle of equality of opportunities.

The Portuguese legislation on work is quite prolix. As national sources we refer the following ones: the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic; Law of Asylum 15/98, 26.3; Law of Entrance, Permanence, Exit and Removal of Foreigners of the Portuguese Territory (Decree 244/98, of 8.8) and the Law of Work of Foreigners (Law 20/98, of 12 of May).

The articles 58º and 59º of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic respectively describe the "Right to the Work" and "Rights of the Workers". In Paragraph 1 it is read: "All have right to work"; 2. "To assure the right to work, the State is responsible to promote: (a) The equality of chances in the choice of the profession or kind of work and conditions so that it is not denied or limited, in function of the sex, the professional access to any positions, work or categories; (b) The cultural and technical formation and the professional valuation of the workers."

The Law of Asylum says in Artº 6 that "the refugee enjoys of the rights and is subject to the duties of the resident foreigners in Portugal".

Decree 244/98 in Chapter III regulates the conditions of emission of visas for the exercise of professional activities. The emission of this visa depends on a favourable decision by Institute of Desenvolvimento and Inspeção of the Conditions of Trabalho (IDICT). In order to establish independent professional activity depends on a decision of the ICEP (Investments, Commerce and Tourism of Portugal or the public entity that regulates the access to the profession. The National Plan of Share for Inclusion (PNAI) integrates with the National Plan of Labour (PNE) and the Program Integrated of Support to Innovation (PROINOV), the called "Strategical Triangle of Lisbon". PNAI still claims the right to work and a minimum income and to the exercise of the civic rights, to culture, education, adequate habitation, participation in the social and cultural life, meaning, the insertion in life in society. It gives emphasis to the contractualization of the answers of social protection, to the congregation of resources, the equality of chances between genders.

As specific objectives it states: "(a) To enable and to activate the people who find themselves excluded from the work market; (b) To promote the insertion of the disfavoured groups; (c) To privilege *learning throughout life* as strategical instrument of inclusion; (d) To develop systems of social protection in a logic of solidarity and sustainability; (e) To develop the social services and equipment network and to make them accessible to whom needs it the most; (f) To adjust the services and institutions to the basic necessities of the people; (g) To develop initiatives for the integrated development of territories faced with exclusion"

All the unemployed must be enrolled in the services of his/her area. According to statute of the IIEFP, in its Article 4º, the institute has the following responsibilities: "(a) To promote as much as possible

the knowledge and the investigation of the problems of the work and of the work market in order to contribute to the definition and adoption of a global politic of employment, capable of creating a progressive national programme of improvement of the working conditions, through the utilization of productive resources integrated in the socio-economical development and growth.; (b) To promote the organization of the work market as an essential part of the activity programs, with the objective of a full employment system where the job is freely chosen, in accordance with the preferences and qualifications, and as a factor of cultural, technical and professional valorization of the human resources of the country; (c) To promote the information, guidance on formation and professional rehabilitation, the placement of the workers, with special observance of the young who left the education system and other disfavoured groups, the analysis of job opportunities, as well as the geographic and professional mobility of the man power.

In spite of what is legislated, in the field we meet a different reality. If it is already complex for the common citizen, the problem is aggravated when it concerns the homeless, who do not have any efficient institutional support with a specific methodology enabling it to work with their problem.

The IEFP has its Centres spread by the capitals of District. All the unemployed must be enrolled in the Centre of the residence area. They will be object of an interview and a process will be opened where the previous qualifications and experiences are registered. They will be subjected to a longitudinal evaluation of their situation and at all the time they can be directed to formation courses promoted by the IEFP or for private institutions. If he made payments to the Social Services in the last 24 months of at least 450 days of work or, in last the 12 made payments relative to, at least, 180 days, in the condition that the monthly income, will not surpass, per capita, 80% of the national minimum wage, he will have right to the unemployment subsidy for what in the stated period of 90 days he will have to require this installment to the Social Security Services. The duration of the right to the subsidy will be different in accordance with the time of continuous payments. In the case of starting a new paid activity he will have to communicate the IEFP and he will loose the right to that installment.

The individuals that do not have any income will be able to apply to the RSI (172,00 €) and to negotiate a project of life that can pass through the integration in formation and/or in the work market, in the condition of having the required competences. This project is evaluated every six month by the technicians of the Social Services and any other involved third party institutions. Initiating the predicted activity they will have to communicate it to the Social Security Services that will cease that installment.

The subject work, in the decided strategies by Portugal is inserted in governmental Programs for the people at risk of social exclusion. SAOM applied, in 2006, to PROGRIDE, measure 2, (Program of Inclusion and Development), subsidized by the Budget of the State and the project was approved. This project, named "Dar Sentido à Vida" (Giving Meaning to Life), will last four years and is directed to the homeless. One of the problems/necessities stated in the diagnosis supporting our application was the low professional qualification/low levels of scholarship of this population and from there the necessity to create mechanisms that promote the professional/educational formation regarding a later insertion in the work market.

The actions we pretend to execute range the psychological, social and clinical evaluation; the development of personal abilities and strategies of "coping"; the mutual responsibility (individual-technician) in the construction of a project of life adequate to each individual, following a methodology of differentiation. Theoretical and practical professional formation in a context of work in the area of food manufacture;

individual tutoring by a multidisciplinary team (social worker, psychologist, jurist); work in network with different partners (health, social security, institutions that receive the homeless); following closely and advising during the process of integration in the work market work until the individual achieves autonomy; group work based in actions of formation/information and in therapeutic sessions; evaluation processes; construction of a database in "Statistical Package for Social Sciences" (SPSS) as a form to contribute with statistical data and to ensue to evaluations in different moments of the process, thus allowing us to re-think the adequacy of our strategies. In the first course of kitchen assistant, course EFA (Education of Formation for Adults) of the B2 type (equalization to 6º year of education), which happened between September 2006 and May 2007, we achieved a 100% ratio of success during the formation, with zero drop outs, and attained 50% of effective work contracts by the end of the professional stages.

Beyond our experience other entities exist, as UNIVAS, Units of Insertion for the Active Life), which support and in the search for work, elaboration of curriculum and preparation for the job interviews (Jesuit Service to the Refugee, AMI). IEFP finances the UNIVAS in what concerns infrastructures, acquisition of equipment, personnel and access to the information networks comprising data on work opportunities. This financing can go up to 100% when the entity does not have other financial resources (Jesuit Service to the Refugee). These projects are valid for three years, and are evaluated every year by the IEFP.

Social Security favours the construction of life-projects in this area for the beneficiaries of the RSI.

It has, still, other programs, like the POC'S, Occupational Programs for the Destitute; PVE, Project Life and Employment (intended for people at risk of social exclusion related to drug abuse). Creation of his own job, favouring individual initiative with resource to micro credit, placement in a work context for a period of two years, measures of the PNAI (for example, the third- "Act for the most vulnerable"), PNE and, in Lisbon, the PROINOV. All these programs aim to give individuals the possibility to acquire personal and professional abilities that can act as facilitators of their insertion in the work market.

The social benefits are the same ones for every citizen. To a foreigner, before being granted the authorization of provisory residence, is not allowed to exert professional activity or to receive formation. This is only possible after the concession of the respective authorization. A resident foreigner has the same rights, in the exercise of the work, as the nationals who work in the same in local and in the same circumstances. The search for work is made through adds in periodicals or with the support of institutions and organizations, as IEFP, companies of temporary work (enterprises that act as intermediates between the search and offer, in these cases all the contracts have a limited period, they never exceed one year), the Employment Clubs (they function in IEFP and some IPSS and are destined to give support to the integration of the candidates in the professional life).

A citizen with authorization of residence can register himself in the local Centre of IEFP. These centres give support in the search for work, they provide guidance and professional formation and qualification courses. All the workers have the right to a wage with a minimum limit (403,00€). This wage has that to be object of the taxing foreseen in the Law for the Finances and the Social Security. When initiating a professional activity that should be communicated to the Ministry of the Finances in order to receive the contributor card. In the end of each calendar year every worker is demanded to deliver a declaration of their earnings for the calculation of the IRS. Social Security also has to be informed in order to process its own tax over the salary (11%), so that the workers can usufruct from its benefits.

Any legalized foreigner can require the RSI. This subsidy is inserted in a program of social protection which intends to support the professional level, work, health, education, habitation and justice.

We have witnessed, in the last years, a bigger concern in legislating measures for these special groups. More social intervention projects have been created, even so if once on the field, the objectives are not always achieved due to a lack of a properly articulated network.

We feel that our project “Dar Sentido à Vida” can be classified as a good one. It was designed specially for this population and accounts for the oscillatory nature of this group in what concerns the “steps” of progression through life. It was conceived in the course of a systemic and holistic approach on each individual, an analysis of the previous life. It was on this basis that we defined and structured every answer, since the work on the personal and professional competences to solidary activities and protected work, to the professional reinsertion in the work market. Even after this moment we keep our support and guidance, conflict managing, assistance in fiscal and legal matters and any other questions or problems that might come up and imply the selection of “coping” strategies. These persons, if it is their wish, can maintain the bond with the project and usufruct from its support for a longer period of time in order to strengthen their self-esteem and develop a stronger and more confident autonomy.

The positive results that this action can produce can be used as a means to break the stereotype and open new niches of opportunity for these groups, and induce employers to look at them in a different way.

“Protected work” is thought to individuals who have an average work capacity equal or superior to one third of the capacity demanded to a worker without limitations of physical and psychic order in the same working post; the objective of it being the possibility of socio-economic reintegration, allowing the individual to start a process of development of his capacities from a lower level. This measure has as its main goal the transition of the workers from this regimen to normal labour conditions. (Project “VER” - the homeless are placed in institutions of solidarity as employees so that they can acquire new competences and knowledge that are suitable of allowing them to integrate the work market in a future moment.. They receive counselling and support while they have as only benefit the acquisition of alimentary goods in the supermarket; Occupational Programs (POC’ S), for beneficiaries of the RSI, Project Life and Employment, for persons with a drug abuse past).

The vocational training aims to capacitate persons with tools that allow them to start a profession and, simultaneously, contributing for the societal development of the individual (Project “Dar Sentido à Vida”).

The training of life abilities and competences allows the endowing of the individuals with essential tools in their individual paths. These abilities of self management and management of interpersonal relationships give them a more humane dimension offering additional resources either for the integration in a future working environment or for the incorporation in other life contexts. (Project “Dar Sentido à Vida,” “Ver” “Porto Feliz” and Espaço Pessoa, Espaço T, CAIS, Misericórdia de Lisboa, AMI, ACISJF, etc). The institutions that support these populations generally work in the development of these capacities.

Excluding some of the few other institution working in this area we are not aware of any other attempts to call the attention of employers and general public into these problems and to the specificity of this group when work is concerned. Nevertheless we do believe in the importance that these measures could attain in the success of the professional insertion in the case of this segment of the population.

The concept of net-working is not yet implemented in Portugal. A lot is said about it, protocols are written, but it never reaches a practical conclusion. The survival of institutions is felt to depend on their protagonism and this is often prejudicial. For example, from the moment SAOM initiated project "Dar Sentido à Vida", Porto Social Security has attempted some meetings with this institution, the Red Cross, the Foundation for the Social Development of the City of Porto and the AMI, with the aim of creating an integrated service of assistance for the population of the District of Porto. It intends to maximize resources, to eliminate overlappings, to allow a better planning and usage of the currently available services thus increasing the speed of response. In a first phase, this assistance would be assured by the partner institutions and, later on, by other institutions with responsibilities on social intervention. This protocol would have as an object the support and social guidance and counselling as a measure of social politics, consisting in a privileged space of manifestation and interpretation, through a diagnostic of the necessities and problems of a population that, for its persistent dimensional nature, demands a continued and global intervention. This service proposes to support individuals and families in economic stress, to attempt the prevention and resolution of problems generating from exclusion situations. It relays in a reciprocity relation between the beneficiary and the technician aiming the promotion of conditions that can facilitate the reinsertion of the persons in active life through counselling and assistance in the construction of a life. The predicted actions include sheltering (identification, selection and channelling), consultation (characterization, diagnosis and intervention plan), negotiation (definition of resources and of contract) and execution (accompaniment and evaluation). Everything seems to fit and to make sense, but obstacles and adjournments are always on the way. It has now been ten months since this discussion was initiated. We had already included the health services in this process, but are having many problems in the involvement of the IDT, most of them of bureaucratic nature. However, in the City of Matosinhos (a neighbour city) this service of integrated assistance already functions successfully since November of 2005. Its economic viability is based on the project "Real Insertion in the Active Life", co-financed by EQUAL.

In this last project User Guide we can read: "The concept and the practice of the integrated paths of counselling – formation – insertion are born from the observation that there are groups that are systematically excluded from the "regular" education-formation system and have persistent difficulties accessing a job. It also derives from the conclusion that the existing responses, even if presented some flexibility, are fragmented and not adequate to the specific characteristics and aspirations of these people".

Homeless children are mainly of foreign origin. The ones of Portuguese origin keep being traced, in bigger numbers every year, are part of a homeless family or abandoned children and, therefore, institutionalized. The numbers of young homeless has also been increasing, mostly due to drug abuse and addiction, young persons with psychiatric pathologies or personality disorders and also, young adolescent girls who get pregnant and are excluded from their families.

If these children are placed in institutions, shelter families or given for adoption, they eventually end up having some stability in their development. In the cases they are with the families or are semi-excluded from the family due to behavioural issues they are faced with habitation, education, familial and emotional needs, always with scarce means of protection and an inexistent network of benefits. The responses are almost inexistent and are directed the population in general, without contemplating the specifics of this age group.

The services we know intended for this target-population support mothers and children victims of domestic violence (ACISJF) or shelter families temporarily (AANP). Institutions working in boarding

school or half-boarding school regimens also exist, receiving children considered to be in a risk situation, until they reach adult age.

Shortly, "In what specifically concerns the integrated politic and social strategies that allow us to fight the extreme exclusion and the phenomenon of the homeless we have not been witnessing an effort to embrace the complexity of the phenomena or even to integrate the diversity of the responses and resources already available" (ISS, I.P., 2005:61).

In the publication of the results of the study carried through by the ISS, I.P., it can be read that the objective of this Institute is "To promote projects of requalification and professional integration, of a progressive insertion, having in account the individual formative and professional trajectories, embracing a multiple system of response: occupational ateliers, protected work, access to formation and, whenever eligible, professional insertion" (ISS, I.P. (2005: 27).

It seems to be consensual that, for a true combat on social exclusion, we have the need to create diversified and multifaceted answers, having in account the heterogeneous nature of this public, their different life and development trajectories and the innumerable problematics bordering them.