

## AURORA. Together Against Poverty.

**AURORA** is a project funded by the EU, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities aimed at combating poverty, social exclusion and the lack of social security. The project was implemented in Austria within a **forum for open discourse**.

In regional projects and with the inclusion of social organizations and the responsible social departments of the respective federal states specific measures for the fight against poverty were developed. Through several smaller projects affected groups were included in the process. In a socio-scientific survey the current state of knowledge as well as the standpoint of the professional public were determined.

A **media campaign** aimed at providing all the necessary information about selected points of focus for a broader public audience.

Two areas of action from the European Union's Lisbon Strategy formed the centre: **Social protection** and **social inclusion**.

The topic of social protection includes the demand for high-quality and sustainable health care and long term care that also has to be accessible to those threatened or affected by poverty. The focus lies on long-term care for older people, also including individuals affected as well as service providers from a migratory background. In the topic of social inclusion measures for the support of those most severely affected by poverty – from homeless people or people threatened by homelessness, to migrants and minorities and people with multiple indication – were developed. The special complex of problems for women and the associated necessity of specific services were explicitly considered.



The Volkshilfe Österreich (People's Aid Austria, NGO) implemented the project from February 2007 to January 2008 in collaboration with the partners SRZ Urban and Regional Research, BAWO Austrian Association of Service Providers for the Homeless, and Initiative Minderheiten (Initiative Minorities, NGO).

The social departments of the federal states of Carinthia, Styria, Upper Austria and Vienna, as well as the Association of Austrian Cities and Towns supported A U R O R A . as regards content and finance.

## KEY RESULTS

A U R O R A . and its 'Forum for Open Discourse' was able to bring together a joyously big number of experts from the most diverse areas. Experts from administration on national, federal and municipal level engaged in vivid and results-oriented discussions with NGO representatives and universities / polytechnics, as well as with politicians of the respective regions within a well-structured framework. It was also possible to integrate affected people.

The results of the survey about the standard of knowledge and expectations regarding the relevant EU processes and most pressing challenges for social policy topped off the image of the general opinion. Furthermore, a broader public was repeatedly addressed through the placement of diverse contributions to the media.

A very interesting balance of results emerged from this one year process: A deficit of information on joint activities of the EU and Austria concerning social protection and inclusion was complained about, while the process itself and its national effects did raise positive expectations. Furthermore, the affirmative reactions from expert circles to the EU's proposals to Austria concerning the establishment of political focal points were remarkably plenty and good. A consensus about the most pressing areas of action crystallised from surveys and events, crossing all special areas: Adequate guaranteed minimum income as key to the struggle against poverty, considerably stronger development of **preventative**



**measures**, protection of individual **dignity** in the design of measures, as well as **empowerment** – the strengthening of self-organizing ability of the affected. The urgent cross section demand was to put **priority** on the specific needs of women because of their particular affectedness. Numerous of the developed detailed propositions are subject to this maxim. Other vertices demanded are focused on an improvement of accessibility to information, considerably greater participation measures and a higher degree of legally guaranteed participation in the design of politics and social planning for people affected. Also, more rights for affected groups and a better enforceability of established rights, as well as more respect for affected people were claimed.

<http://www.aurora-austria.eu>

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