

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR THE PREVENTION OF RE-OFFENDING

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1. Introduction

Re-offending represents a large part of crime statistics in Europe. Studies show that a small number of people commit three quarters of all crimes in certain categories. Politicians are therefore trying to find prevention policies which will allow them to better target this group of people, to monitor them and to prevent them from re-offending. This report shall contribute to this discussion by mapping some examples of how actors in Europe and countries of Northern America are dealing with the problem of re-offending.

The report is based on a literature and internet research, carried out by Zoom – Society for prospective developments e.V., Göttingen (Germany) and SRF – Società Ricerca e Formazione in Italy, Torino (Italy). Aim of the research was to support the development of the project “Innovative Strategies for the Prevention of Re-Offending” led by the European Forum for Urban Safety (EFUS) with relevant data necessary in the decision making process at city level. The project has partners from municipalities in different European member states. In a first step each project partner carried out a national research of existing activities in the field of preventive work against re-offending and some practical approaches were experienced during study visits in the participating municipalities.

The actual research therefore focuses on activities and trends realised in other countries than taking part in the project (Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Romania, Czech Republic) in the EU and Northern America. One of the hypotheses of the project is, that for an effective preventive work a partnership between the different actors dealing with social cohesion has to be put in place, with a partnership being the only method which guarantees a global and diverse approach. Therefore the report gives special attention to activities in networks and to be realised at local level.

Considering the different backgrounds of the participating cities as well as their disparate levels of knowledge and practice in relation to the prevention of re-offending, it has been considered essential that the research activities should focus

on already existing practices in Europe, on a taxonomy of the identified practices, formulating a minimum set of criteria that would render a project “innovative” and on identifying international and European institutions recommendations and resolutions that can be implemented at local level.

Therefore the report is structured as follows: in chapter 2 European and Northern American discussions and recommendations are summarised. In chapter 3 concrete examples are described. Including a short definition of what could be seen as an innovative approach.

2. Discussions and recommendations

Looking on european discussions in the last years it is impossible to not paying attention to developments realised in the frames of the programme EQUAL, which aimed to combat discrimination on the labour market. Offenders and/or prisoners were one of the specific target groups. In round 2 of the programme 66 Development partnerships were working wwith (ex)-offenders, 55 of them exclusively with them. The main part of activites were realised as regards the re-settlement-support or aftercare of from prison released inmates. 50 of 55 development partnerships worked in this field. (EQUAL Background Paper 2007: 3) This documents one major topic, if not the biggest issue in the discussion about prevention of re-offending in Europe. How can the collaboration between penitential system and social help, social welfare system in municipalities be optimised to reduce rates of recidivism. Table 1 shows the other main areas of activities (N=55):

Table 1: Areas of Activities in EQUAL Development Partnerships Round 2

Areas of Activities	N	%
Re-settlement support, aftercare	50	91
Assisting prison inmates (action within prisons)	44	80
Differentiated focus on target groups	34	62
Cooperation arrangements, multi-agency working	31	56
Training and support for key operators	26	47
Preparation for self-employment (incl. cooperatives)	12	22
Work with/assistance to families	12	22
Awareness raising, lobbying, publicity	16	29
Documentation of good practice	2	4

Source: EQUAL BackgroundPaper 2007

Beside several single programmes there were a transnational cooperation developing some recommondations on how the reintegration of (ex)-offenders should be organised. These recommendations meet the idea of prevention of re-offending basicly and cover a wide range of actions.

The recommendations (EQUAL Background paper 2007:13ff) given for the national and local level are:

1. "Successful re-integration of (ex)-offenders requires a case management approach from arrest, through the period of imprisonment, to the time of release and beyond."

A Case Management Approach is meant as cooperation of different stakeholders, including statutory, non-governmental and private agencies and the offenders together with their families and victims, in the design, development and implementation of approaches to reintegrate offenders.

Some central needs to set up such a network successfully are the involvement of different departments in the penitential system, of the local service provider in social work and a motivation of offenders and their familiar background to work on strategies of reintegration. The different actors should inform each other about the steps they are doing together with the (ex)-offenders and there should be a central responsibility of coordinating activities of the different actors, the case-manager.

Such a case management approach should be financed by different sources, inter-institutional barriers regarding financing should be overcome.

2. "All prisoners should have the opportunity of engaging in training and educational programmes that will increase their employability."

To prepare release in an optimal way, all prisoners should have the opportunity to increase their employability. Such approaches exist in most EU Member States. It should be secured that these approaches include procedures for a thorough assessment of the individual prisoner's competences, needs and aspirations, at the point of admission, on the basis of which an

appropriate resettlement plan can be developed and the training that is offered in prison should be geared as closely as possible to the needs of, and skills gaps in, the surrounding labour market(s) and the views of prospective employers should be sought in order to improve the targeting of the provision.

3. „Having a job is the most important factor in preventing re-offending - so more efforts are required to engage both public and private employers and to explore other forms of job creation."

Getting a job as an (ex)-offender is not only a question of individual skills, but as well a question of employers not willing to give a job to an ex-offender. Therefore the third recommendations points out that in the cooperation of the different actors in the field of reintegration there should be a special attention to the awareness raising of employers and public campaigns to increase the chances of ex-offender to get a job.

4. „Attention must also be given to other aspects of the lives of (ex)-offenders if re-integration is to be successfully achieved.”

Beside employment there are several other relevant factor influencing the chances of a successful reintegration of ex-offenders. Housing, families, care of children are often crucial factors for the (ex)-offender and any resettlement plan should ensure that the individual has somewhere to live on his, or her, release. The planning how to solve these factors should not start after release but in preparation to release.

5. „There is an urgent need to promote change in prisons and to foster a culture of innovation and feedback in order to support cooperation with external agencies and the type of developmental action that is outlined above.”

To enhance the chances of cooperation between penitential system and actors outside of the prison a culture of cooperation between prison and external actors should be fostered.

These recommendations were developed after a broad discussion process of different promoters and partners of several development partnerships concerned with the topic of working with (ex)-offenders. In another background paper of 2006 the experiences of different development partnerships are documented and there one can find the main discussion lines.

“The responses that are outlined below demonstrate that while enhancing the employability of (ex)-offenders is central to any transition process, there are other aspects that require attention. Experience from EQUAL indicates that (ex)-offenders are unable to focus in training or on their jobs when they have serious problems in other areas of their lives. Several EQUAL-DPs have tried to develop a seamless transition but to do so they have had to create new collaborative relationships between a range of agencies and actors in the resettlement process.” (Background Paper 2006:2)

These sentences are the introduction to the chapter "Transition from Prison to the Outside World", in which different questions, like in which areas of transition (ex)-offenders need most support, if support has to be differentiated in relation to different target groups (young people, women), what has to be done to advise and prepare inmates for the transition into freedom, what arrangements have been made for the cooperation between different sources of support or how (ex)-offenders can be supported best within the community are answered by describing the approaches of the different development partnerships.

The main consequences drawn from this discussion one can find in the above mentioned recommendations. But to be a bit more detailed one can learn from the different approaches, that there are some crucial aspects like employability, qualification and training of (ex)-offenders. There are since years a lot of approaches, single projects, bilateral cooperations between prison and schools or further educational agencies to train inmates. Without training, without employability there is no chance to find new solutions after release based on employment. But putting attention only to the qualification of (ex)-offenders are far from being successful. Without a support in private life, in enhancing problem solving capacity, without a guidance to settle down after release the chances of a successful resettlement without recidivism are poor.

In Great Britain, the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales has published a framework for action concerning the resettlement of young offenders. (YJB without year). Similar to the recommendations given in the frames of EQUAL there are discovered seven key areas for the resettlement of young (ex)-offender. These areas are:

- Case Management and Transition
- Accommodation
- Education, Training and Employment
- Health
- Substance Misuse
- Families and
- Finance, Benefits and Debt

Even if you can observe in Great Britain a more developed prevention framework than in most of other EU member states it is easily to recognise that the recommendations, key areas are targeting the same levels of intervention.

Employment and accommodation, social networks including families and solving individual problems like debt, drug abuse and health and services needed like children care are the topics which should be in the focus of approaches to prevent reoffending.

These topics should be realised in cooperation between different actors from different areas with a key responsibility of one key actor. The services of different organisations should be monitored so that progress can be assessed and different activities are not contradictory.

The topic of monitoring and evaluation is one of the conclusions the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention have drawn already in 1998. Beside a shared basic philosophy that resources of different support agencies are not only to help the individuals but as well the society, that resettlement processes need continuous efforts, that there is the need for an increased collaboration between administrations and that there is a need of local crime prevention councils the National Council for Crime Prevention is arguing for the need of monitoring and evaluation:

“The different administration involved in release preparation do not collaborate in the monitoring of measures taken. In order to assess the effects of a given measure the individual in question must be followed up through the whole chain of resettlement efforts. It is only then that it becomes possible to assess how the various administrations maintain the continuity of measures to release.” Therefore “Collaboration between different administrations whose job it is to support and help those persons who have not found their place in the community requires common frames of references for making a ‘diagnosis’ “ (National Council for Crime Prevention 1998:53).

In the above mentioned EQUAL development partnerships and as well in UK there are some approaches trying to tackle this problem by developing reporting tools helping the case managers to steer the case and to know which help or support is still required.

In the UK there were some successful projects following such a comprehensive approach of resettlement management like On-Side, led by NACRO, from 1999 to 2002. (NACRO 2003: Running a resettlement project for young offenders. London 2003 www.nacro.org.uk) which influenced governmental efforts on reducing reoffending. In 2004 the Home Office published the National Reducing Reoffending Delivery Plan. Initiated by this plan a lot of different activities were started and collaboration between different levels of actors were established. In the already mentioned paper Youth Resettlement – A framework for action published by the Youth Justice Board (YJB without year) all relevant aspects are described. The resettlement support on local level is delegated to the Youth Offender Teams (YOT) who is involving other local agencies in the project

McNeill/Whyte (McNeill, Fergus/Whyte, Bill 2007: Reducing Reoffending. Social work and community justice in Scotland) are describing the framework for resettlement practice in Scotland as one part of throughcare practice. "NOS (National Objectives and Standards) use the term throughcare to denote the provision of a range of social work and associated services to prisoners and their families from the point of sentence or remand, during the period of imprisonment and following release into the community. That means that the tasks of support giving are integrated in a system of restorative justice, of probation services and of voluntary assistance for those released from prison unconditionally.

(No) Taxonomy of approaches

According to the description of different discussions and recommendations it should be obvious that it is not easy to find clear categories of different projects/approaches dealing with resettlement processes. Most of the projects to be found in the following chapter are cross-category activities. They are following comprehensive approaches and try to cover almost all phases of action needed for effective assistance, as

- establishing networks,
- preparation of release as regards housing, qualification and employability,
- guidance after release as regards housing, labour market access and stabilizing social surrounding.

The network is the fundament for the the two other categories. As the networks are foreseen as cooperation between penitential system and local social service and labour market actors the activities starts during detention but do not stop after release. That means that "the most obvious partners might include prison services, probation services, local authorities, education and training agencies, employers and NGOs that operate resettlement schemes." (Background Paper 2006:8)

3. Identified Projects/Approaches

The demand of the project was to identify innovative approaches of preventing reoffending. In all areas of social work it is not easy to assess, whether an approach is innovative or not. Technical innovations are much easier to assess as such. To narrow the definition it could be useful to remind a very general definition of innovations. Innovations are new solutions being quite different from the status quo. They bring about a relative improvement, which is expressed in a higher benefit.

Considering this general definition of innovations there are two critical criteria, which have to be fulfilled to be able to assess a new approach as innovative:

- **Novelty**

The novelty of a development outcome is given if there is a considerable change from previous state. The questions of when is something new, how new something has to be to be considered as new, and in which relation to a special reference state the novelty is assessed as really new, is not able to answer in general. E.g. in EQUAL, the above mentioned European programme, that aimed on the development of innovations as regards the combat of discrimination at the labour market, it was formulated, that an innovation is seen as it, when one aspect or element is new or an already known solution is transferred to a new context.

- **Higher benefits**

A newly developed approach can be seen as an innovation, if it is more effective in solving the problems identified than the current practice (higher problem solving capacity). It has to be more efficient, i.e. deliver better results for the same cost or provide a similar result with less effort.

These two criteria should be fulfilled to assess a special approach as an innovative one in the context of the project. There are a lot of further criteria to describe the quality of innovations, but as regards the use in the context of a project targeting on the exchange of innovative practice, it is not necessary to define quality criterias for

innovations, as this research and the project in general have not the resource to measure the innovations.

As regards the criteria novelty the partner in the project or other cities in Europe searching for new approaches to prevent recidivism have to assess by themselves if approaches named in this report are new or already existing in their surrounding or not.

Therefore the criteria of higher benefits is in the focus of the identification of existing practice. As the authors of this reports were not able to evaluate the approaches, the project description should have given an evidence that a higher benefits are expectable by realising such approaches.

Example 1:**Name of the project/activity:**

You're EQUAL (Ireland)

Target group

Prisoners and/or ex-prisoners

Players:

Roscommon Partnership Company

Castlerea Prison

Cork City

- Local employment Service
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Alliance Centre

Galway city Partnership

Probation and Welfare service Cork Prison

Roscommon citizens Information Services

Roscommon Vocational education Committee

Education Unit Castlerea Prison

Fundamental idea

The project was run by a development partnership in EQUAL. The development partnership was a Consortium of agencies from the state, voluntary and community sector and from representative organisations within the labour market. The fundamental idea behind the partnership was the preparation of offenders for community life after release. Most important the vocational qualification and the preparation for the entry into labour market.

Objectives

- Prepare offender for resettlement after release
- Networking of different agencies

- Creation of direct links between potential employers and prisoners/ex-prisoners
- Implementation of one-Stop services

Description of concrete activities

- Internal Training and Mentoring in the prison
- External Training and Mentoring
- Employment marketing and Creation
- Awareness Raising
- Advocacy and Public Policy

The case management group and the Equal in Prison group both dealt with the selection of participants and had a multi agency approach to fulfilling whatever needs the prisoner had in terms of release whilst still in prison. The projects mentors then worked as the link to the outside agencies with the assistance of the local networks in planning for the prisoner's release. Relevant agencies were drawn into play in an organised and structured way with the aim of resettling the prisoner back into society and keeping him / her out of prison. Both groups could and did bring professionals in from the outside if and when it is deemed necessary to fulfil the specific needs of participants.

Overcoming complexities/ problems.

- Community/ voluntary sector, Statutory bodies and Service providers do not work in the same way. Each may be approaching the issue from a different direction with differing priorities.
- Good communication avenues which keep everyone in the picture are vital. Lack of information and misinformation are not conducive to building good working partnership relationships.
- Open debate from day one.
- Positive acceptance that everyone is around the table with their own agenda.
- Mutual concern for the target group and each agency having a specific remit are not mutually exclusive.
- Clear lines of responsibility in terms of staff, committees and subcommittees.
- Keeping the bigger picture in mind always.

- Be open to differing levels of involvement by agencies, full members, associate members and experts for particular issues.

Sources of information:

<http://www.neva.ie/brogan.pdf>

Example 2:

Name of the project/activity:

Exit! – From prison to social cooperative (Sweden)

Target group

Prisoners and/or ex-prisoners

Players:

Föreningen Bryggan

Gothenborg Voluntary center

Gothenborg employment service

Social cooperatives

Fundamental idea

Involving ex-offenders in social cooperatives to enhance reintegration process

Objectives

- Models for how people with substance abuse problems and/or a criminal history can establish themselves on the labour market by starting and running social cooperatives
- Forms of cooperation between the social economy and the public sector
- Methods of cooperation between the various public sector units that are responsible for granting social allowances to individuals,
- Changed attitudes in society towards people with drug problems and/or a criminal past,
- Through the partnership in the Exit projekt demonstrate ways of exercising influence at individual, organisational and societal levels.

Description of concrete activities

Ex-Offenders and Drugabusers were integrated in social cooperatives, where they were involved in the organisation and daily work. By involving them in work processes and in social networks a reintegration was supported

Sources of information:

http://www.grutbildning.to/download/18.5edf71c21132ea5763e8000653/listening_ulla_karin.pdf

Example 3:

Name of the project/activity:

Youth at risk (Sweden)

Target group

Young people aged between fifteen and twenty at risk of becoming involved in crime or other forms of antisocial behaviour

Players:

Different Community Actors

Fundamental idea

Supporting young people by mentors

Objectives

'Youth at risk' is a programme for young people aged between fifteen and twenty at risk of becoming involved in crime or other forms of antisocial behaviour. The programme is voluntary and is based on the idea that with assistance from "mentors" the youths will learn to set their own goals and to work to achieve them.

Description of concrete activities

The work builds to a large extent on volunteers committing themselves to the project. The project also involves mobilising all local actors within the community to participate in the work with vulnerable youth - local authority administrations, the business community, clubs and associations, and the general public.

The work is divided into three phases:

- **Preparatory Phase:** Volunteers were recruited to support the project
- **Implementation Phase:** a six day intensive course with the youths, volunteers and support providers to reflect goals the youths want to achieve in the third phase. Involvement of parents and relatives
- **Follow up Phase:** 12 month period the young people are in contact with the voluntary mentor to reflect the developments in achieving the goals. Both are taking part every month in workshop.

Sources of information:

<http://www.eucpn.org/goodpractice/showdoc.asp?docid=34>

Example 4:

Name of the project/activity:

Youth rise (Finland)

Target group

Young people aged 15 to 20 convicted of crimes, young released prisoners aged 18 to 30, unemployed adults able to function as 'lay' mentors for both work goals and life management goals

Players:

- Probation Service District Office in Kajaani (administrator)
- Local authorities in the operating area, involving various units: police, courts, substance abuse workers and prisons
- Representatives of various youth actors, workshops, associations of the unemployed and trainers

Fundamental idea

Qualifying young people for the labour market and find comprehensive approaches to enable them to manage their daily life.

Objectives

Aim of the project was to provide comprehensive support for young people's lives and to reduce substance abuse and recidivism by increasing the training motivation of participants and thus improve their labour market position through commitment to training and work

Therefore the projects tried to bring together the disparate resources and programmes of actors in the region and to build up shared values and models

Description of concrete activities

Youth RiSe' aimed to help responding to the challenge of the most difficult to employ and those threatened by social exclusion, through regional partnerships and a comprehensive model for action. The project is based on involvement, giving responsibility, intensive support, rehabilitation, training, mentoring and cooperation between the various actors.

The intervention programme is aimed at young people aged 15 to 20 who have been found guilty of a crime or who can be expected to slide into a vicious circle of criminal activity. Participants are entered as quickly as possible into a three-month programme that includes individually customized support measures, rehabilitation, surveys, community service, motivational activities and referral to further action. They are made to commit to taking responsibility for their own lives instead of drifting and receiving passive support measures. Also, they are supported in their efforts to achieve a meaningful life without intoxicants and crime.

The resettlement programme is aimed at young people aged 18 to 30 who are released from prison. The ten-month programme provides support in the transition from prison to freedom and helps newly released young prisoners manage the first months that are so crucial for achieving a crime-free life and avoiding recidivism. The aim is for participants to gain a life free from intoxicants and crime by improving their labour market position and life management skills. A mentor helps participants with everyday tasks and provides guidance into training and work. The training periods acquaint participants with various occupations, prepare them for vocational qualifications, or add to existing skills. The work involved is practical, feasible work in the public, private or third sector.

Sources of information:

<http://www.equal.fi/default.asp?sc3=3398&sc2=3400&sc=3419>

Example 5:

Name of the project/activity:

PoMo – Path with own mentor (Finland)

Target group

15 – 21 year-olds caught up in the initial stages of recurrent criminality and inmates under 35- years of age undergoing release from prison in the regions of Kainuu and Kuusamo, Northern Finland

Players:

- Probation Service, District Office of Northern Finland / Kajaani Unit
- Kainuu Joint Municipal Authority (e.g. municipal social administration, housing administration, mental health and substance abuse welfare work)
- Employment and Economic Development Centre (TE Centre) of North Ostrobothnia, Labour Market Department
- Employment and Economic Development Centre (TE Centre) of Kainuu, Labour Market Department
- Regional police authorities, prosecutor's offices, district courts and regional prisons
- youth work programmes in the Kainuu and Kuusamo municipalities and regions
- parish and church run special youth work, Tukiasuntoyhdistys ry (association for supported housing) and village associations

Fundamental idea

The Pomo project tried to guide young offenders and young inmates undergoing release from prison towards a new, positive path in life through the help and guidance of a personal mentor.

Objectives

The project aim was to comprehensively develop the life management of young offenders and young people undergoing release from prison by encouraging adoption of normal daily rhythms and supporting drug-free and crime-free leisure time activities. Hereby the spiral of recurrent criminality should be stopped and the labour market position through commitment to education and/or working life should be enhanced.

Description of concrete activities

Each participant in the project was assigned their own personal support person, i.e. mentor, who assisted the offender in shaping for themselves a new future without crime.

The project developed an operating model in which, as part of an apprenticeship agreement, the mentor undertakes studies in health care and social services alongside their mentoring work. This facilitates the Mentor's own vocational development while also helping to address the predicted labour shortage within the health care and social services sector.

A personal plan was drawn up for each young person participating in the project, in which the individualised objectives for the short-term and long-term, the means by which these goals will be achieved and the designated responsible persons are specified. The plan was reviewed and evaluated as necessary as well as regularly at least every three months. The main emphasis of the personal plans was on the young person taking responsibility for themselves.

Sources of information:

<http://www.equal.fi/default.asp?sc3=3507&sc2=3708&sc=3734>

Example 6:

Name of the project/activity:

WOP – It works if you work it out (Finland)

Target group

The project is aimed at male prisoners under 30 years of age, coming from southern Finland.

Players:

- Kerava Prison
- Local social service providers in home towns of inmates (networkers)

Fundamental idea

To build an individual and realistic plan of the future based on the prisoner's situation. This is done in co-operation with the prisoner, the staff and the networkers. The implementation of the plan begins during the imprisonment and continues after the release.

Objectives

- Create a model of network to support the prisoner after release
- Diminish recidivism
- Develop and reinforce functional abilities, problem-solving and other cognitive skills to support substance-free lifestyle
- Support the former inmate's functional and occupational role in society
- Enable the continuum of rehabilitation

Description of concrete activities

The prisoners plan their lives after release with the workers of the prison, projectworkers and the networkers in the prisoner's home community. To enable this even more, project has two employees who continues the work with the prisoners after their release.

The projectworker begins the work with the client already during the time in prison. Most significant is, that the work continues after the clients are released from the prison. Plans and agreements are made with the networkers in the prisoners home communities already during the time in prison. The work after prison supports the holistic rehabilitation of the client and reinforces his functional abilities.

During the time in prison projectworkers and the networkers in communities aim to assure following things for every prisoner

- Housing; supported housing is primary
- Income
- Something meaningful to do; education, practical training, work, etc.
- At least outpatient care for substance and/or mental disorders in clients home communities
- Securing the long continuum of rehabilitation

The work after prison includes professional tutoring, housing support, service guidance and social work with intoxicant abusers. Work with the clients families and with other meaningful people close to client is important part of the whole . Work of the projectworker in the community can be characterized as intensive guidance with educational and therapeutic elements.

Sources of information:

<http://www.rikosseuraamus.fi/tulostus/16925.htm>

Criteria of innovations

General definition:

Innovations are new solutions being quite different from the status quo. They bring about a relative improvement, which is expressed in a higher benefit.

Considering this general definition of innovations there are two critical criteria, which have to be fulfilled to be able to assess a new approach as innovative:

Novelty

The novelty of a development outcome is given if there is a considerable change from previous state. The questions of when is something new, how new something has to be to be considered as new, and in which relation to a special reference state the novelty is assessed as really new, is not able to answer in general. In EQUAL it was formulated, that an innovation is seen as it, when one aspect or element is new or an already known solution is transferred to a new context.

Higher benefits

A newly developed approach can be seen as an innovation, if it is more effective in solving the problems identified than the current practice (higher problem solving capacity). It has to be more efficient, i.e. deliver better results for the same cost or provide a similar result with less effort.

These two criteria should be fulfilled to assess a special approach as an innovative one in the context of the project. There are a lot of further criteria to describe the quality of innovations, but as regards the use in the context of a project targeting on the exchange of innovative practice, it is not necessary to define quality criteria for innovations, as this research and the project in general have not the resource to measure the innovations.

As regards the criteria novelty the partner in the project or other cities in Europe searching for new approaches to prevent recidivism have to assess by themselves if approaches named in this report are new or already existing in their surrounding or not.

Therefore the criteria of higher benefits is in the focus of the identification of existing practice. As the authors of this reports were not able to evaluate the approaches, the project description should give an evidence that a higher benefits are expectable by realising such approaches.