

The first phase of the LoWER network 1996-1998

The detailed objectives over this period that laid the foundations for the second phase were:

- Conceptual and methodological work constructing and integrating existing data on low-wage employment to determine the feasibility of common indicators of low-wage employment in relation to social exclusion, and to establish the need for a European database on low-wage employment and social exclusion. A special Seminar was held at Oxford University at the beginning of July 1996. A basic overview conference was held in Bordeaux in January/February 1997
- Contribute to innovations in the analysis of low-wage employment problems as a mechanism of social exclusion and a labour market process at the same time. The focus was on the causes and consequences of developments in low-wage employment at the European level, especially in their significance for processes of social exclusion. Particular attention was paid to new and promising theoretical strands of research with the aim of broadening the debate, to include the role of demand for low-wage labour i.e. away from a fixation on supply-side aspects like the effects of unemployment benefits. An analysis seminar was held in May 1997 in Maastricht and a conference in London in December 1997
- The search for competent policy advice on low-wage employment and social exclusion, all participants realizing very well that there are no easy answers here. Policy responses differ widely between countries, and increasingly so. Although there is no a priori need for unified action at the European level, the seriousness of the problem of social exclusion requires that the possible advantages of concerted action should not be missed. A policies seminar was held in Milan in March 1998 and a conference in Groningen in November 1998
- Involving organisations doing practical work in the field, such as the London-based Low Pay Unit, with the aim of developing a close cooperation in matters of policy analysis, seeking maximum reinforcement of the network's contributions on policies to prevent and combat social exclusion.

Through the above LoWER drew in more researchers who are active in the field, and stimulated scientific debate on data, analysis and policy with regard to low-wage employment and social exclusion, particularly in Member countries not yet covered.

Further information on each of the events mentioned above can be found through 'network events' (previous conferences and seminars). The Final Report, giving a detailed description of the activities during the first phase, can be downloaded: [Accomplishments of the LoWER network 1996-1998](#). Some details of the output in this report are outdated and an updated overview is found through [publications](#).