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2010
European Year
for Combating
Poverty and
Social Exclusion



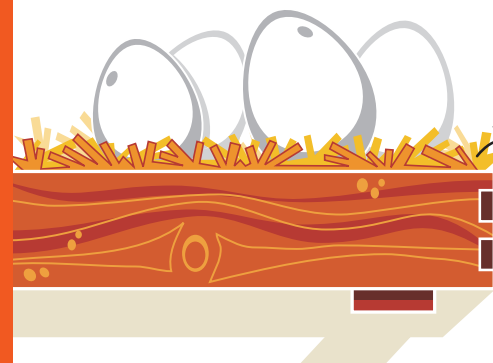
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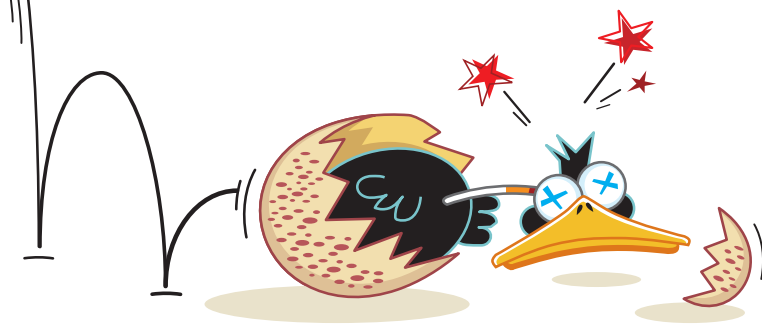
To stop poverty and social exclusion What can I do?



I am
Super Integro Actúo,
the social inclusion
hero



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The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

PROGRESS mission is to strengthen the EU contribution in support of Member States' commitments and efforts to create more and better jobs and to build a more cohesive society. To that effect, PROGRESS will be instrumental in:

- o providing analysis and policy advice on PROGRESS policy areas;

- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in PROGRESS policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large

For more information see:
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html.

Author: Lorena Álvarez de Sotomayor.
Super Integro Actúo's Creative Idea: Miss Boule.
Published in: 2010.

There are swans, ducks and super heroes in all societies. Which do you want to be?



Dear reader,

My name is Super *Integro Actúo* and I am the social inclusion hero. Yet, I am not your typical hero, as I have no super powers and I get my strength from change.

Even though it might seem rather strange, I was a swan until recently, just like the rest of my family, my friends and most people around me. Then my life was turned upside down when my best friend began to change into a duck.

It did not happen overnight, and it was rather gradual, but it all coincided with a series of events that would change his life: he had serious family problems that really depressed him and he lost his job. He was so sad that he would not talk to anybody and just spent

the day withdrawn and cut off from everyone. We were very worried about him, but we just thought that he would get over it. Then, when we realised how much his very appearance had changed, we saw that it was much deeper than we had first believed.

This is what made me look at things in a different way. Until then, I had never stopped to think about why society was mainly made up by swans and there were just a few ducks. I always thought it



was your birth right, until it happened to my friend.

I began to look carefully around me and I realised that there was a fundamental difference between the two species that goes beyond our mere appearance. While swans are truly part of society and play a fundamental role in it, thanks to our ways of life, our education, work and hobbies, ducks are left on the sidelines for a range of reasons, which can be physical, psychological, educational or even financial.

Some ducks cannot go into shops and leisure centre as they physically cannot get up the entrance steps and cannot see the pictures on the screen. So, every time their swan friends arrange to go out for a meal or are talking about a film they have seen, the ducks are automatically left out.

Then there are the others who cannot get a job or make friends as they are from faraway countries and come up against linguistic, cultural and ideological barriers.

I began to feel really down when I began to realise all this and many other things. I did not know if the change would be permanent and of course, I did not want my friend to be excluded for ever.

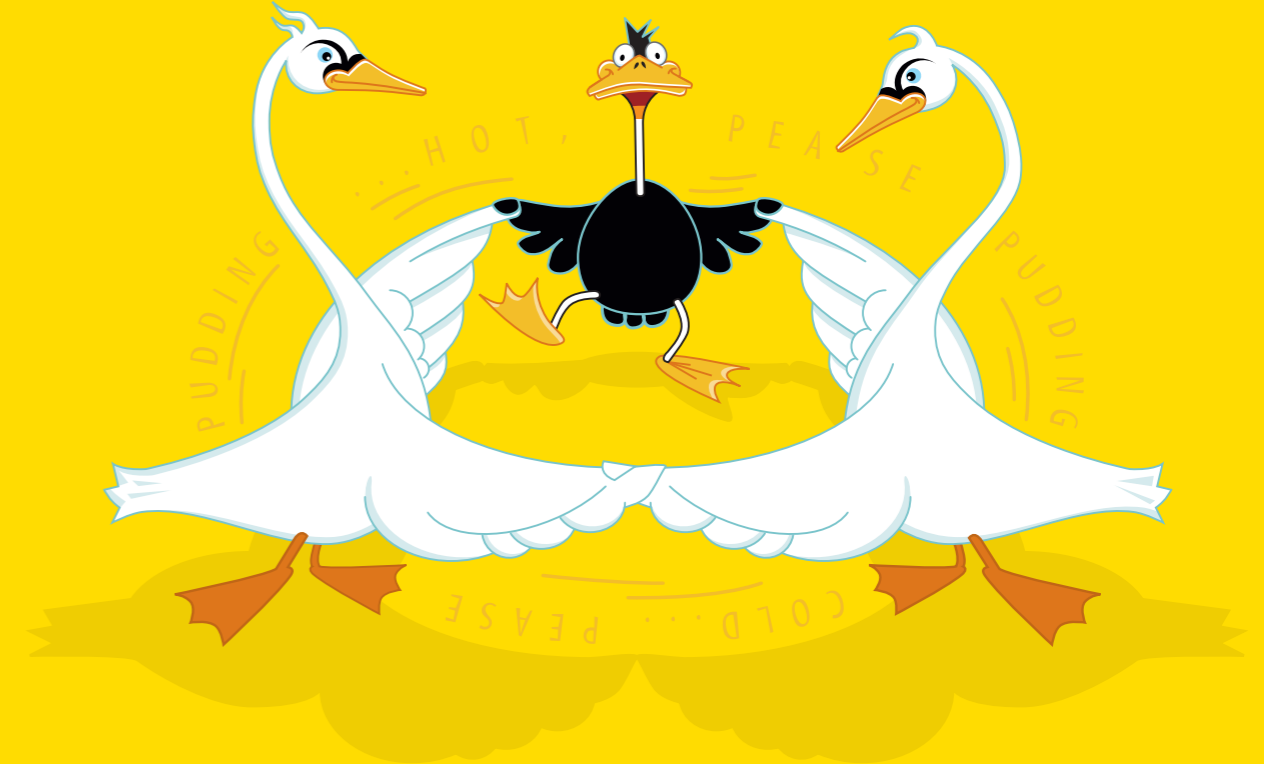
I began to investigate and I was delighted to discover that all it takes is a little effort for us to make changes in our day-to-day lives, and there is no need for dramatic gestures or go very far.

And when I began to fight for change, I also changed and I became Super Hero. So, I would like to share with you how anyone can achieve this.

Now it is your turn.
Do you want to be the next social inclusion hero or heroine?

To stop poverty and social exclusion
What can I do ?

At home



Things are built brick by brick and we have to start with our immediate surroundings if we want to change things. So, my first steps towards social inclusion began with my family. When I began to analyse what was going on around me, I realised I had to change many attitudes...


Teaching the youngest members of the families: brothers, sisters, sons, daughters...

The family is very important factor when it comes to how our personalities will turn out and the values we will have in the future. How can we expect our children to be social inclusion super heroes if we did not set them off on the right track?

I have noticed that children absorb much of what is going on around them. They can really be affected by the comments that they hear and then take them on board without really knowing what they mean.

They are the future of a society based on respect and equal opportunities for all its members and therefore teaching them values is fundamental. We have to make them thirsty for knowledge, answer their doubts and teach them not only through words but also through our actions:

- The importance of *fighting against ideological (homophobia, xenophobia, racism, male chauvinism, authoritarianism, discrimination...) and architectural barriers (accessibility for the disabled)*.
- Equality. *Show them that partners take decisions together and that the household chores have to be shared.*
- Respecting other people. *For the elderly, for people from other cultures or other ethnic groups, for those with a mental or physical disability, for those that think differently.*
- Solidarity. *Teach them to value what they have and share.*
- Responsible consumption and recycling. *Do not let them destroy things, throw away food and have all the toys and latest fads they want.*



Stand up against ideological barriers and for equality, respect, solidarity...

Respecting the elderly: parents, grandparents...

My life is so busy that sometimes I do not have time to listen to the older members of my family, help them or let them know how important they are. Without realising it, I even began to think that their ideas were old fashioned and so their opinions were worthless as they did not really understand what was important today.

Luckily, I realised in time that they have been around for much longer than me and have much more experience of life and when I was small and could not look after myself, they took me under their wings and took care of me.

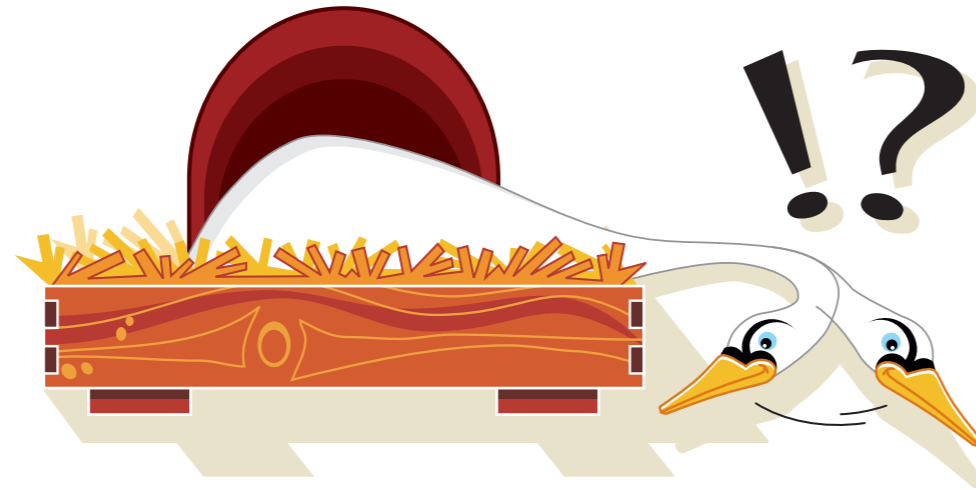
Now they need us. We cannot abandon them. And now it is our turn to look after them like they did for us in the past.

Spend part of your time listening to them every day, apply to be their personal carer to your local authorities and if you cannot look after them properly because of your job, contact a social worker, ask for home help or look for a day centre or home that meets their needs.

To stop poverty and social exclusion
What can I do ?



With my neighbours



I am sure if you begin to look around, you will see that some of your neighbours are or have become ducks.

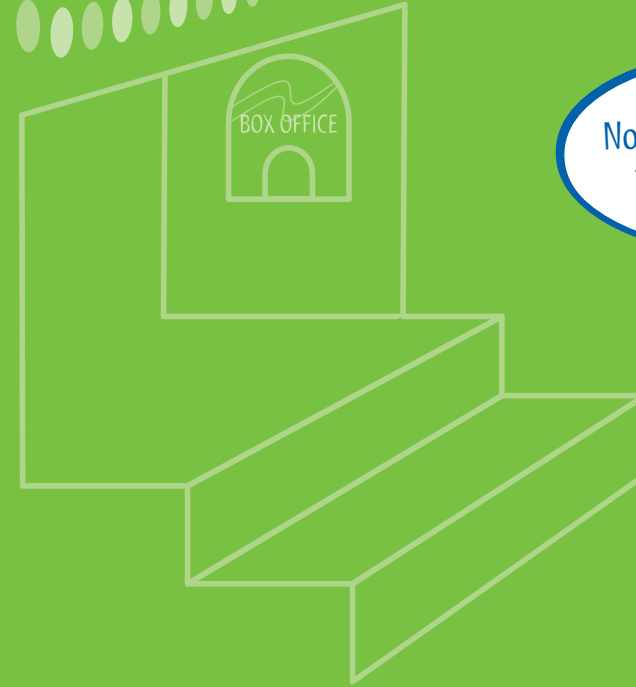
This may be because they have become less mobile due to their age, an accident or an illness and they cannot go out without help or they might even need a wheelchair or a frame to be able to get about.

Some neighbours might even seem to be living a normal life, but physical or mental abuse is going on behind the curtains, or a person may be alone and not able to do everything for themselves.

Don't stay on the sidelines. Work out what your community needs and offer solutions: an access ramp, a lift with the controls in Braille, emergency lights, reporting something in time or just some of your time and a friendly face.



To stop poverty and social exclusion
What can I do ?



In my neighbourhood

Now I won't be able to see the film!



I am going to ask you one of the questions that I asked myself when I began to look into the difference between ducks and swans: "Does my neighbourhood have all the basic requirements for integrated coexistence?"

I considered the following aspects to find out the answer:

Access to education and training

Is it easy to get free basic education and vocational training to make sure that no one is left behind and that everyone can compete in equal conditions?

Support the setting up of public vocational training centres for the unemployed and the disabled, suggest to your cultural centre that they teach sign language and organise Spanish classes for immigrants, together with Internet and computer courses...

Looking after children and the elderly

Does your neighbourhood have a publicly-funded nursery school and a home or day centre for the elderly?

If that is not the case, talk to your neighbours and start things rolling to set them up and if they do, make sure that you regularly drop in to see how things are going there.

Infrastructures

Not everyone is the same age or with the same level of fitness. Is your neighbourhood accessible?

You should try out this exercise which will open your eyes to many things that you probably have not even noticed before.

From now onwards, when you are walking down the streets, look at how high the kerbs are, if there are cars parked on the zebra crossing, if all the traffic lights make a different sound each time they indicate that the pedestrians can or cannot

cross, and if they are loose or raised paving stones that could cause people to fall.

Note how many cinemas, theatres, museums, shops, restaurants and hotels are accessible for people in wheelchairs, for baby's prams or the elderly with reduced mobility, and if the ramps in buses and premises are appropriate or, what is more likely, if they are too steep to be used properly.

You can also check how clean and safe the recreational facilities in the playgrounds are.

When you have finished, I am sure you will have had your eyes opened. And you will want to do something about it. *Tell your local council what needs to be done so it can take the necessary steps.*

But that is not enough, you can also stop and think about what you can do so your neighbourhood is accessible. It is not enough to have the right infrastructures if we do not have the right civic attitudes.



Do not park on pedestrian crossings or in the disabled-parking zones. If you give your business a face-lift, make sure that it has an access ramp or lift. Help people, do not get impatient with people who walk more slowly than you and let through and give up your seat to the elderly, pregnant women and people with a disability.

With just a little effort, you can help your neighbourhood to become a model for everyone to follow. Do something and get people to do something to get it done!

To stop poverty and social exclusion

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At work

At work

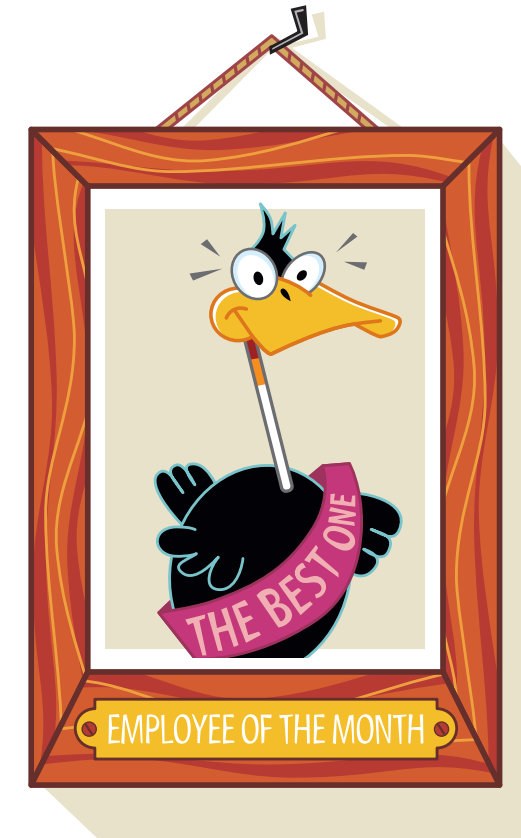
Applying basic standards of respect and coexistence, both by the management and the workforce, is an essential factor to create a healthy work environment. But when I listen to the news, I realise that that is not always the case and we therefore need to stop and think about if we are encouraging integration in our company.

As a manager

Do you put Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into practice?

You will first need to consider the following points to answer this question:

- When you are hiring someone, do you just look at the candidate's skills or do you take other variables into account?
- If your company has more than 50 employees, do you comply with the legal 2% of disabled workers in your workforce?
- Do you pay a decent salary? And do different workers doing the same tasks get paid different salaries according to their sex?
- What happens when one of your employees is pregnant?
- Do you respect maternity and paternity leave? And sick leave?
- Do you follow a work-life reconciliation policy for all your staff? Do you pay for overtime?
- Do you ensure a healthy work environment?



As a member of staff

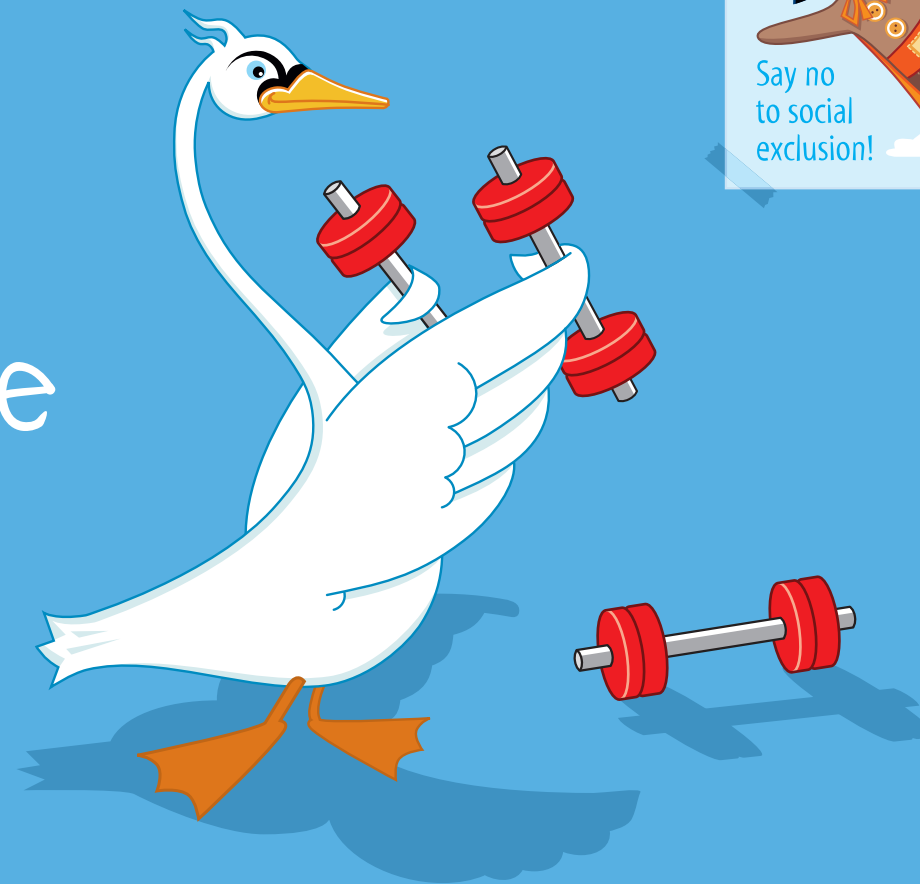
I have realised that it is sometimes inevitable that we establish roles and pigeonhole our colleagues. We even make judgements about their work, question their professionalism and get into power struggles. The only thing they achieve is to create a tense and competitive environment instead of letting us consider, for example, if our work place is adapted to employees with a physical disability.

Do not discriminate against your colleagues because of their origin, their physical and mental skills, their sexual orientation or their religious beliefs. I am sure that you can learn something from them or they can from you.

Distributing tasks and cooperation makes the work easier, as does knowing a little more about those people with whom you spend most of your day so you can help them according to their needs.

To stop poverty and social exclusion
What can I do ?

In my
free time



In my free time

Learn more

After having observed where it comes from and what discrimination is due to, I realised that much rejection of certain situations and groups is due to a lack of information and the acceptance of stereotyped roles.

It is important that before giving your opinion about something you do not know or before writing it off, you first of all find out for yourself, break down barriers and see for yourself. Find out about other cultures, visit the centres of other countries in your city, get involved in their activities, films, festivals... Apart from learning more and becoming more open minded, I am sure you will change your mind about many things.

Awareness raising

Share what you have learnt with the other people around you, show them the other situation.

Responsible consumption

When I used to go into a shop, if I liked something and I could afford it, I would buy it without even thinking about the work that had gone into this product or if the workers' or farmers' rights had been respected.

Then I found out how much the farmers got for each kilo of fruit and vegetables or for each litre of milk, the sweat shops where adults and children make shoes and clothes for fashion chains and leading brands, and the pollution caused by many of these processes.

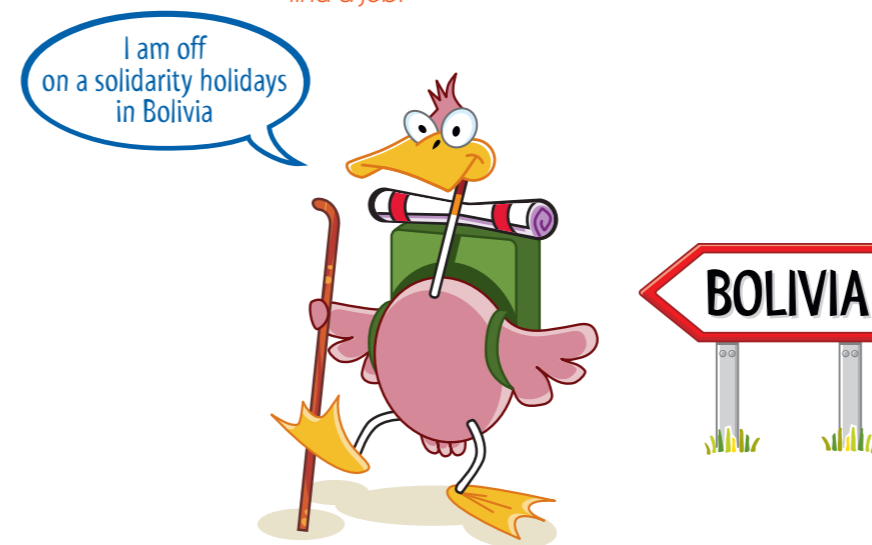
Now, before I buy anything I find out.

Do you know what insertion companies are? Have you heard about fair trade shops? Have you tried a product from organic farming?

Get involved with solidarity campaigns

I have collected clothes, shoes, school material and toys over the years that I no longer use even though they are in good condition. All they do is sit in a drawer and collect dust.

Solidarity recycling is a good option. You get some space back and it can help people go to school or find a job.



Volunteer

I was very surprised to discover the many different types of volunteer work available. Not just in terms of the groups to be supported, but rather in the different ways you can do so.

Whoever you are and no matter how much time you have, you will always find a least one type of volunteer job for you.

- If you have time on your hands: the more traditional volunteering. There are hundreds of groups in your city that you can help in different ways.
- If your problem is a lack of time: volunteer online. Choose the tasks according to your skills and do them on your computer - all you need to find is between 15 and 120 minutes.
- If you want to get out of a rut and discover over countries: solidarity rallies and holidays. You can set off on an adventure and look for sponsors or spend part of your holidays helping on one of the international cooperation projects run by different NGOs in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Internet is a very useful tool to find lists of options and entities with which you can get involved in Spain and abroad.