

## New responses to poverty and social exclusion from Social Work: the Mesa de Instituciones Sociales en Acción Social de Elda (the Mesa ISAE)

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**Abstract.** In the last decade Spain has been involved in a serious economic crisis which has evidenced the difficulty of the Welfare State to respond effectively to situations of poverty and social exclusion. In relation to Social Services, new proposals and new networking strategies have been fostered to satisfy the social needs of those who face social difficulties. The Mesa ISAE, which was constituted in 2009, was conceived with the aim of providing an alternative to the work which was already being developed by both the public Social Services System and third sector entities of the municipality of Elda (Alicante, Comunidad Valenciana). This coordinated action has succeeded in avoiding overlaps, establishing formal inter-institutional proceedings and improving management. The results of our research confirm that this tool is able to provide an immediate response to citizens, as it reduces bureaucracy and improves citizens' well-being.

**Key words:** Social Services, Social Welfare, Social Planning, Social Policy, Social Work.

**Summary.** Introduction. 1. Poverty and social exclusion in a context of economic crisis. 2. Objectives and methodology. 3. Results. 3.1. The background of poverty and social inequality at territorial level: secondary data analysis. 3.2. The typology of the families assisted by the Mesa ISAE. 3.3. Application of resources by the Mesa ISAE. 3.4. Social actors' discourse analysis. 4. Conclusions. 5. References.

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### Introduction

The Welfare State was settled in Europe after the Great Devastation with the aim of tackling situations of poverty and social exclusion by means of full employment. For many years, an inter-class agreement assured social stability, economic progress and equalized population living conditions, especially concerning those citizens who belonged to the lowest social groups.

Following the oil crises starting in the 1970s and the turns towards a neoliberal ideology in the 1980s, the role of the Welfare State as guarantor of social equality was criticized. At the same time new social phenomena, such as the "outsourcing", which increased the number of precarious jobs and labour insecurity,

began to appear as a consequence of the globalisation.

The trend towards poverty and social inequality has intensified throughout the last decades, especially since the start of the last international economy and finance crisis. The security which society enjoyed had disappeared, but the Welfare State had not been able to face the risks of the new social phenomena.

New social intervention alternatives are being developed with the involvement of public and private institutions with the aim of answering to the new social challenges: long-term unemployment, lack of income to pay for basic needs, absence of short-term perspectives in the near horizons, impossibility to cover basic supply (electricity and water), etc.

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People in such situations need an immediate and rapid response. Nevertheless, coordinated timing between the different social actors rarely exists in public administration. An example for that is how the Community of Valencia deals with the so called “minimum insertion income”. Despite the existence of a legal background regulating the above mentioned “minimum insertion income”; this legal background has never been a rapid, urgent and continuous tool to support those who need attention as far as they are in a situation of either or both poverty or social exclusion. In short, such an increase both of poverty and labour precariousness reveals the weakness of Welfare States to give a proper response.

Taking into account that context, an innovative network strategy has been developed in the municipality of Elda: the so called Social Institutions in Social Action of Elda (in following lines abbreviated as the Mesa ISAE). The participating organisations are: “Elda’s Social Services Municipal Institute” (autonomous body of Elda’s City Council), “Elda’s Red Cross Local Assembly”, “Caritas (organisation that provides parochial assistance) of Elda’s Parish Churches”, the so called “Lions’ Club”, “Rotary Club” and “Solidary Consigns”. The aim which justifies the origin of this new organisation was to respond immediately offering social assistance to those families who are hit the situation caused by the economic crisis.

This organisation, called the Mesa ISAE, is divided in two levels: the so called “staff level” and the “technical level”. At the “staff level”, the Mesa ISAE technical action is managed and funds for social action are collected. At the “staff level”, both the presidents and the COs of each involved organism participate. At this level, monthly meetings are held, in which not only the guidelines that technical staff members will develop are drafted but also new projects are proposed. The “technical level” consists of technical staff members from the “Red Cross”, “Caritas”, Primary Attention Social Services” who control and apply the resources established by the organisation.

In Social Services system, cases are forwarded to the Mesa ISAE by the Social Work Zone Unit of the Municipal Institute of Social Services, which is the first level of the ladder.

After the study and the diagnosis of the family’s situation, the zone social worker submits a report-referral to the Mesa ISAE, in which he transmits an intervention proposal

and suggests the application of certain resources. Meetings attended by technical staff members of the Mesa ISAE are held weekly. Technical staff members are in charge of the following tasks: 1) Assignment of cases, which is the Municipal Institute of Social Services Social Worker’s task, 2) Drafting a joint social intervention plan, which determines the areas where technicians intervene, 3) Exchanging information about family’s situations among the various organisations and bodies 4) Proposing the application of resources. The applied resources are: basic eating, medication (for chronic or urgent patients), water and electricity supply, delivering lots for children’s needs (milk, nappies, jars of baby foods), the so called “Individual Economic Subsidy” and “The Guaranteed Citizenship Subsidy”.

The current article aims at analysing the management carried out from the Mesa ISAE during the years 2010-2016, in which the Mesa ISAE was involved, on one hand, by studying the attended family’s sector and the applied resources; and on the other, by studying the technicians and directors’ assessment of the coordination achieved in the Mesa ISAE mentioned.

## **1. Poverty and social exclusion in a context of economic crisis**

Poverty and social exclusion are two related concepts. In the last decades, the most developed societies have experienced important structural changes (the ageing of the population, the erosion of the classic family model, the growing immigration, the increasing number of precarious jobs and so on). These changes have involved redefining the concept of poverty and restructuring the Welfare States. The concept of social exclusion has replaced to a great extent the concept of poverty as it includes new vulnerable groups and the various existential realities which affect such new groups (Hernández, 2010).

Research related to poverty and social exclusion in Spain is becoming more and more frequent (Hernández, 2008; Laparra et al., 2014; Lluch, Esteve y Torrejón, 2017; Foessa 2008, 2014). The mentioned research underlines that poverty situations have a lot in common with employment and its quality (Tezanos, 2005). The WS is paramount to tackle these phenomena as well as to fight a dual society (Tezanos,

2005). As Castel (2004) states: “There is no social cohesion without social protection” (p. 478).

The concept of poverty has always been linked to the lack of economic resources. Poverty is very dynamic because of its connection with the labour market and the number of precarious jobs. *The Foessa Report* (2008) highlighted the emergence of a new type of poverty: “transitional poverty”, what means not only entering into a situation of poverty but also escaping from it. Such type of poverty is the consequence of kind of labour market and the resulting contracts. This is particularly true according to temporary and partial contracts as well as to the level of coverage of social protection systems. Fighting against poverty in developed societies does not only involve material needs but also personal freedom, what is related to achieving social citizenship. Concerning that point, “poverty does not only involve being able to get to enough aliments nor enough clothing nor to live in a satisfactory place but also lack of freedom” (Standing, 2013, p. 270).

Other than the concept of poverty, the concept of social exclusion involves more dimensions than the sole existence of economic insufficiency. Social exclusion is the result of a process which leads them to growing disconnection from society as well as to the loss of their social and personal bonds, what makes it very difficult for a person or a collective to access not only to the opportunities but also to the resources which are available for a society (Subirats, Gomà & Brugé, 2005). The poverty concept, as well as the social exclusion one, has evolved. Even if in the past, social exclusion situations only concerned specific social groups, the spreading and the continuous change of current society is causing new vulnerability and inequality situations which affect more social groups. In addition to that, family support reveals its incapability to respond to social vulnerability situations. To such extent, “the fragility of those familiar network structures that support individuals also provokes greater vulnerability to marginalisation and social exclusion (...). Certain family groups are not solid enough to protect against social exclusion” (Subirats, Gomà & Brugé, 2005, 2005, p. 130). In addition to that, Hernández (2010) makes following statement: along the social exclusion process, we move over time from the initial position to the final one following an itinerary which is divided in certain stages. The stage a person is positioned at

depends on which disadvantageous social situations (one situation or more than one) occur during the time as the person goes throughout that process.

It is increasingly obvious that not only labour market changes but also the growing labour precariousness and insecurity generate in post-material societies new dynamics and new processes related to poverty as well as to social exclusion. In a progressive way, the number of citizens who are confined to social segregation spaces due to neoliberal politics as well as to the increasing social inequality is growing. Dealing with those phenomena, Stiglitz (2012), Standing (2013), Sassen (2015) and others are developing concepts in relation to those phenomena, such as excluded, precariousness and expelled.

In 2007 the economic crisis began, what put in evidence the weakness of our social protection system to answer to the households’ impoverishment that resulted from the unemployment rates’ increase. *The Foessa Report* 2014 detected the decline in matters of equality and wealth distribution. Mainly, such regression is manifest in: a) rejuvenation of poverty that rises in households with children, b) higher risk of households, c) growing risk of poverty among people with an university degree, d) absence of major changes depending on the activity, although with a high number of employees who suffer from poverty and e) absence of variation in the geographic pattern, even if some autonomous communities have a higher number of citizens who suffer from poverty than others.

From a critic perspective, the Welfare State is not achieving the expected results. This is manifest in the increase of the poverty rates, which reached 22.3% in 2016 (INE, 2017<sup>3</sup>) throughout the Spanish territory. The fact that people are no longer able to meet their basic needs and that demand for food has increased have questioned the role of the Welfare State.

The Welfare State, which has settled in Europe in the last quarter of the twentieth century, is still present in the world’s most developed countries. Nevertheless, its scope concerning the economy and its social and political consequences has generated a lot of criticism, so that its existence has been questioned to a great extent during the last decades (Del Pino y Rubio, 2013, p. 23).

<sup>3</sup> INE: National Statistics Institute.

The social service public system counts with minimum insertion income to protect against poverty and social exclusion situations. Minimum insertion income is “the last mechanism to protect against poverty and social exclusion, the last support that prevents falling into the ground as well as residual and subsidiary in relation to other protection schemes” (Arriba, 2009, p. 21). Each Autonomous Community Social Services’ laws and their own ones which regulate these subsidies, show that they have a more significant content and a wider reach than as if they were common economic subsidies and that their assignment is bound to a social re-insertion process. Moreover, present proposals aim at including in social policy different social action tools, new experiences as well as at unifying synergies concerning various fields to give an effective response to citizenship’s needs.

In one of those fields, we have the collaboration of the third sector with the public administration sector to draw up and manage municipal social politics. According to Pastor (2015), such is “a very useful practice in joint politics and shared experiences” (p. 245), especially at the local level. The establishment of inter-institutional organizations to respond to the immediate demands of the citizenship within the social agenda of each entity enhances the exchange, generates shared experiences and improves the operability between the different social actors. Considering the present context, such experiences mean an opportunity to address poverty and social exclusion situations and to introduce new (inter and intra) organisational work models in the field of Social Services. In fact, in its seminar “Strengthening coordination between unemployment social services and Social Services” (2016), the European Commission highlighted the need to carry out reforms to integrate unemployment social services and Social Services. Therefore, coordination between all social protection systems is on the social agenda for European countries as a whole to improve social interventions.

In 2015, six years after the Mesa ISAE was constituted, the Community of Valencia published an orientative guide for municipal solidarity bureaus containing proposals on the regulation model for the organization and operation of local solidarity bureaus. Nevertheless, the mentioned guide had not lead to a progressive model shift in the municipalities

of the Middle- Vinalopo’s region, in the Province of Alicante.

Similar experiences of coordination are undertaken in other municipalities, but other than in the case of the Mesa ISAE, they concern the fields of health-care, education and employment. Well-known, in the Social Services field, is the response of the Backing For Social Inclusion Program, which is spread throughout most of the national territory. According to the response facilitated by the mentioned program, social workers act in coordination with professionals from other fields such as health-care, education, the judiciary, etcetera, if they are necessary for the social intervention. However, there is neither coordination nor networking *ex ante*. The Mesa ISAE’s suggestions are innovative because the Primary Attention Social Services system grants urgent action in the specific sectors of poverty and social exclusion. Thanks to such suggestions all social institutions are involved in the social problematic areas, in diagnosing the necessities and in planning the social intervention.

## 2. Objectives and methodology

The research hereby enhances the approximation of the Mesa ISAE’s external managing performance to its internal managing performance as a new way of experiencing social intervention. Therefore, a twofold objective is pursued. On one hand, from an external perspective, we seek to know which has been the response given in this municipality by the Mesa ISAE to the population in poverty and a social exclusion situation during the 2010-2016 period. On the other hand, from an internal perspective, we focus on an analysis of the coordination and organizational system of the Mesa ISAE.

Our research hypothesis is that the action of the Mesa ISAE has not given a total response to the families which have been affected by the economic crisis, but that the Mesa ISAE has meant a new inter-institutional working model, which has enabled to avoid duplicities and to speed up families’ immediate attention.

The approach to social reality adopts a mixed methodology. First of all, Spanish and Alicante’s most relevant secondary data according to poverty indicators are analysed from a quantitative perspective. After that, a statistical analysis is developed, in which not

only the profile of those who received attention thanks to the Mesa ISAE, but also the resources demanded during the 2010- 2016 period have been considered. The sample of the field work consisted of all families who, during the years from 2010 to 2016, were directed to the Mesa ISAE. As a result of that, the whole study universe involves 2011 households. The research was developed from the month of July, 2017, to the month of December, 2017.

To know such a group profile, we present an analysis of the most relevant socio-demographic variables (nationality and the family unit type, especially) as well as of the transversal activities, which the Mesa ISAE has developed through time, exactly from 2010 to 2016. On the contrary, this study does not focus on other socio-demographic variables such as gender or age. Such variables are considered irrelevant for this study, because the Mesa ISAE aims at families; consequently, it is only on them that this study focuses on.

As for the resources applied by the Mesa ISAE to give a response to population either or both in poverty and in a social exclusion situation, following variables have been stated: a) basic food, b) access to medication, c) payment for basic water and electricity supply, d) the Individual Subsidy granted by Elda's Social Services Municipal Institute, e) minimum insertion income of the Autonomous Community of Valencia, f) provision sets for children under two years old and finally g) allowance for school canteen and school books.

From a qualitative perspective, semi-structured interviews were conducted with privileged agents in charge of directing the Mesa ISAE. Seven interviews were conducted. On one hand, four of the interviewed persons were

either institutional managers or people who bear institutional responsibility. On the other hand, four of the interviewed persons are technical staff members who are responsible for social intervention.

The interview consisted of the following parts: a) assessment of the participants' action, b) assessment of the response of the Mesa ISAE to the urgent needs and finally c) resources used in social intervention. After the interviews were transcribed, we carried out a simple content analysis of the discourse.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. The background of poverty and social inequality at territorial level: secondary data analysis

During the last decade there is an increase of reports and statistics dealing with poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, at that period of time, social inequality has grown exponentially shaping a dual society conditioned by unemployment and labour precariousness (Standing, 2013).

The so called "Observatory for Research on Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Community of Valencia", in its report *Poverty, inequality and remunerated work* (2017), provides a comparative analysis of the differences between each Autonomous Community regarding the poverty risk rate. The Community of Valencia is placed slightly over the Spanish average. During the period of time, on which this study is focused, the poverty risk rate has been growing markedly until year 2014, where it reached 34.7% (+3.0 year-on-year growth rate).

Chart 1. Comparative poverty risk rate in Spain, Community of Valencia, Alicante and Middle- Vinalopo's region during the period 2010-2016.

Years	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Spain	26,1	26,7	27,2	27,3	29,2	28,6	27,9
Community of Valencia	29,6	27,9	30,6	31,7	34,7	32,9	30,8
Alicante			26,8	20,1	24,2	21,0	20,9
Middle- Vinalopo's Region			23,8	13,5	19,7	19,3	20,2

Source: Survey of Living Conditions (INE), Research Observatory on Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Community of Valencia, own production.

It is noticeable that in Spain as well as in the Community of Valencia the poverty risk rate shows a linearly rising trend until 2014, when it is at its peak. In the last two years it has been decreasing at a slow pace, above all, in the Community of Valencia. Despite the economic cycle's shift, poverty rates continue to be very high.

Thanks to the Observatory for Poverty and Social Exclusion Research in the Community of Valencia, we can compare the data of the province of Alicante and those of the Middle-Vinalopo's region, where we find Elda. Analysing the statistics, it can be realized the fact that the poverty risk rate of the province of Alicante has been under the levels registered in the whole Community of Valencia. The poverty rate yielded in Middle-Vinalopo's region does not reach the provincial level and is well below the national average, specially, in the year 2013 as the statistics registered 13.5%. In 2016, a remarkable fact is that, as a result of the improvement of the data at provincial level, the Middle-Vinalopo's region yielded similar data to those of Alicante. Therefore, we are talking about a territory situated in a low poverty rates geographic context.

### 3.2. The typology of the families assisted by the Mesa ISAE

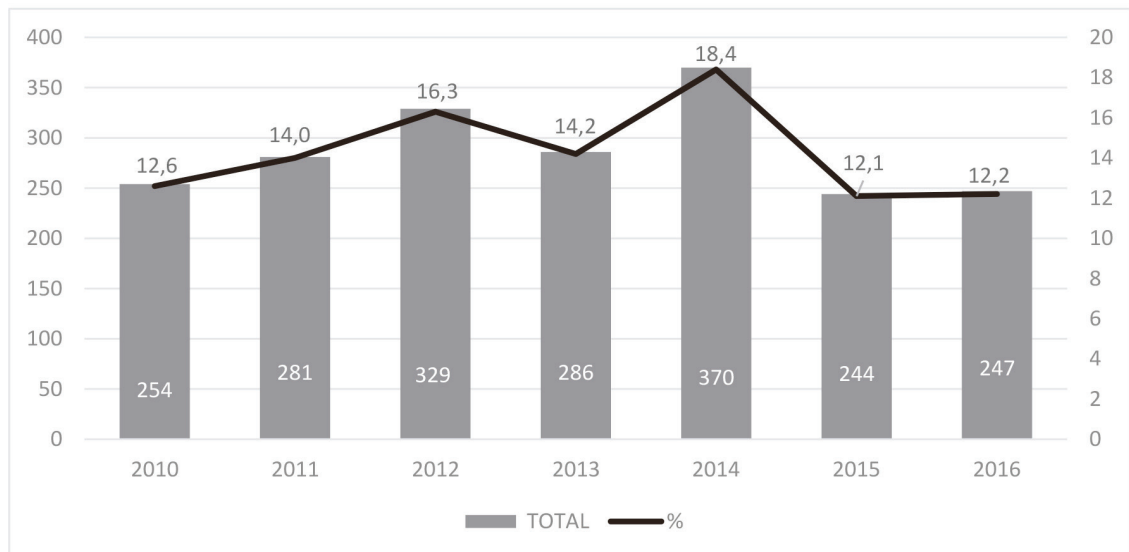
First, it is to be stated that the assistance to Elda's population has progressed following the same trend as the evolution of the economic crisis and the rates of poverty, published by the INE and by the Observatory of Research on Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Community of Valencia.

The total amount of assisted families in situation of poverty and social exclusion is 2011. According to a longitudinal analysis, we notice a progressive increase from the year 2011 to the year 2015, but then a remarkable decrease begins. During those years, 11% of the assisted families had unsubscribed from the Mesa ISAE, because normality returned to their problematic situation.

The chart below shows the annual evolution of beneficiary households and the percentage over the total amount of the period from 2010 to 2016.

Concerning the nationality of the assisted population, native population is represented by the 83.6% (1.682 beneficiaries), while foreign population is represented by a far lower per-

Graphic 1. Beneficiary households of the Mesa ISAE during the period 2010-2016 (absolute and relative data).



Source: Mesa ISAE, own production.

centage: 16.4% (329 beneficiaries). The hereby provided data follow the same trend as the ones provided in the *VII Report about the State of Poverty* (2016), where the 82.1% of those who are in risk of social exclusion have the Spanish nationality and only 17.9% are foreign people.

As for the typology of the households assisted by the Mesa ISAE, the number of two-parent households (1.239 families) is higher than the number of one-parent households (538 families) and of the one-person households (234), including native and foreign population in each of the three cases. In following chart, we compare the poverty risk rate provided by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística and the data related to the households' typology provided by the Mesa ISAE.

We can note that the data of INE and those of the municipality of Elda are not coinciding in relation to the poverty risk rate of households depending on their typology. In the case of INE, the single parents have higher rates than the ones of the municipality of Elda, where, on the contrary, two-parent households suffer higher risk of poverty. This is more outstanding in the years 2011 and 2013, where 68.0% y 65.7% of the by the Mesa ISAE assisted households were two-parent ones. The data show how the one-person households receive much less assistance from the Mesa ISAE, at a great distance from the poverty risk rates (INE). This indicates that this resource has been specially

adapted to two-person households with children in charge.

Taking into account the kind of performance (initial or recurrent), very interesting data are to be observed, especially, the fact that initial assistance showed a linear increase from the year 2011 to the year 2013. During that same period of time, as the economy crisis took place at its harshest, the unemployment rate was very high and those suffering under long duration unemployment were running out of such contributory benefits, which the employment system required to support them.

On one hand, the percentage of those in a situation either or both of poverty and social exclusion who were assisted for the first time (999 people) was 49.7%, above the total beneficiary population. On the other hand, the percentage of those who were assisted previously (1.012 people) was 50.3%, above the total beneficiary population. Following Graphic 2 shows the evolution of the cases, in which assistance was received during the period from 2010 to 2016, separating "cases where assistance was provided for the first time", from "cases where assistance was provided on the previous year".

The amount of previously assisted population increases most significantly after 2012 reaching its highest value in 2014 (20.2%). Note that most interventions, either initial (53.1%) or recurrent ones (44.9%), took place during the time period from 2012 to 2014.

Chart 2. Family units benefiting from the Mesa ISAE in relation to the risk rate (INE) during the period 2010-2016.

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Tasa riesgo	ISAE	Tasa riesgo	ISAE	Tasa riesgo	ISAE	Tasa riesgo	ISAE	Tasa riesgo	ISAE	Tasa riesgo	ISAE	Tasa riesgo	ISAE
Biparental	55,2	28,7	49,9	24,2	48,1	25,2	47,6	22,0	53,3	27,3	50,1	31,1	53,3	30,0
Monoparental	27,4	65,0	27,6	68,0	28,3	59,9	27,7	65,7	30,5	55,7	28,5	59,0	28,1	59,9
Unipersonal	26,1	6,3	26,7	7,8	27,2	14,9	27,3	12,2	29,2	17,0	28,6	9,8	27,9	10,1

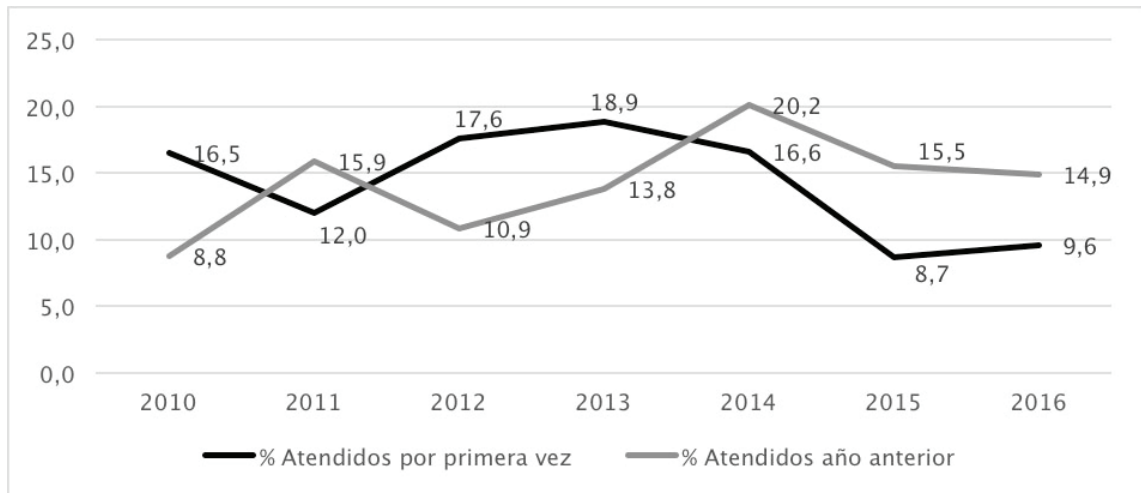
Source: Survey of Living Conditions (INE) and Mesa ISAE, own production.

Chart 3. beneficiary population assisted by the Mesa ISAE in relation with assistance typology (initial or recurrent).

Years	Initial assistance	%	Recurrent assistance	%	Total cases assistance	%
2010	165	16,5	89	8,8	254	12,6
2011	120	12,0	161	15,9	281	14,0
2012	176	17,6	110	10,9	286	14,2
Years	Initial assistance	%	Recurrent assistance	%	Total cases assistance	%
2013	189	18,9	140	13,8	329	16,4
2014	166	16,6	204	20,2	370	18,4
2015	87	8,7	157	15,5	244	12,1
2016	96	9,6	151	14,9	247	12,3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1012</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Mesa ISAE, own production.

Graphic 2. Evolution during the period 2010-2016 of the Mesa ISAE's assistance in relation with its typology (initial o recurrent).



Source: Mesa ISAE, own production.

### 3.3. Application of resources by the Mesa ISAE

Among all analysis' tools of the Mesa ISAE's management, one of the most important ones concerns the resources applied during the mentioned period of time. Each institution has put at the Mesa ISAE's disposal its own resources so that they are managed in coordination with any other institution. In the chart

hereby, we can see the number of resources applied by the Mesa ISAE during the period on which the study focus.

The total number of the resources applied by the Mesa ISAE is 4.443. In relation to the institution which provided them, the most of the times applied resources were Social Services Benefits (28.8% over the total amount), including the Individual Economic Subsidy" and "the Minimum Insertion Income". In sec-



Chart 4. Applied resources by the Mesa ISAE during the period 2010-2016.

Years		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL
Caritas	Basic food	91	107	117	105	135	103	93	<b>751</b>
	Electricity and water supply payments	57	105	110	120	156	133	56	<b>737</b>
		44	66	28	35	58	36	39	<b>306</b>
Red Cross	Basic food	0	6	40	12	29	26	30	<b>143</b>
	Lots for children	113	75	91	92	86	71	52	<b>580</b>
SS.SS.	Social Services benefits	154	173	228	144	257	154	174	<b>1.284</b>
SIAE WORKSHOP	School books allowance	74	49	90	164	26	-	-	<b>403</b>
	School canteen allowance	16	30	88	70	35	-	-	<b>239</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>549</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>4.443</b>

Source: Mesa ISAE, own production.

ond place, are Caritas basic food supply of and the payment for electricity and water, 16.9% and 16.6%, respectively.

In the period of time from 2012 to 2014, coinciding with population's increasing demands, the recorded number of applied resources progressed as follows: 792 (2012), 742 (2013) and 782 (2014). Moreover, throughout the process, each entity did not contribute assigning its own resources following a linear pattern, as we can see from the following graphic.

Caritas has been the organization that has provided the biggest quantity of resources to the Mesa ISAE throughout all the Mesa ISAE's existence, especially in 2011 and from 2014 to 2016. Caritas was followed, during the period of time from 2010 to 2016, by the Red Cross, who only decreased its contribution in 2013. That same year, there was a greater contribution of the Mesa ISAE's own resources, although from that time, it began to decrease. Stress is also laid on the fact that, during the years from 2015 to 2016, resources allocated by the Mesa ISAE for beneficiary families

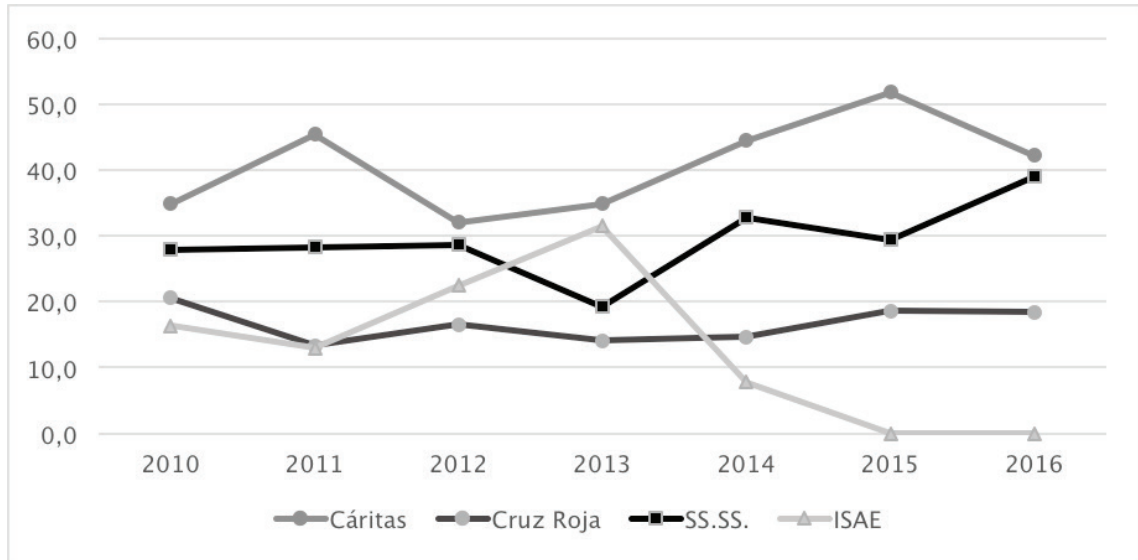
were not Mesa ISAE's own resources. On the contrary, the partial coverture of resources was a consequence of the provision of other organisations, such as for example the Community of Valencia and its provision of free textbooks. Primary Attention Social Services have kept their management at a constant level, for it only ranged from 15% to 20%, depending on the year.

### 3.4. Social actors' discourse analysis

Those interviewed social actors<sup>4</sup> who are responsible for the activities of the Mesa ISAE believe that the actuation developed by this new instrument based on coordination and the networking management of resources has been

<sup>4</sup> E1: President of Elda's Local Red Cross Assembly; E2: Director of Elda's Inter-parish Caritas; E3: Social Services Counsel Member; E4: Elda's Municipal Institute for Social Services Manager; E5: Municipal Institute for Social Services Technic Staff Member; E6: Elda's Red Cross Local Assembly Social Intervention Reference Person; E7: Elda's Inter-parish Caritas Social Worker.

Graphic 3. Evolution during the period 2010-2016 of resources' contribution of each entity.



Source: Mesa ISAE, own production.

an opportunity to give a complete response to those who are in a poverty situation.

The seven interviewed persons, institutional representatives as well as technic staff members involved in social intervention, make a positive assessment of the management carried out by the Mesa ISAE.

E1: It is a coordination Mesa which different third sector organisations, together with the City Council, give an effective and efficient response to people avoiding overlaps.

E4: It has been achieved to assess the accomplishment of the objectives shared by different organisations and to rationalize resources.

Moreover, it is valued how, thanks to inter-institutional coordination, this new working strategy makes it possible to give an immediate response to urgent situations related to the coverage of basic needs.

E5: What I praise the most of the Mesa ISAE management, is the immediateness of the response given to tackle a situation of need.

E7: After a deeper and more accurate assessment of shared cases, it has allowed to achieve a remarkable improvement in the management of resources and the assignation of more effective aid.

This new social intervention strategy has made it possible to offer an urgent diagnostic

analyse and to assess different acting strategies in a coordinated way, so that social resources are adapted to either or both felt and normative needs.

E6: The networking structure makes it possible to use all available resources efficiently and to detect families' real needs in a better way.

E7: This sort of coordination allows giving responses where administration is not that effective facing some kind of situations because of the established bureaucracy and where other organisations are ready to confront certain contingencies.

E2: It has enabled to give adequate responses according to the emergency degree of each of them.

Concerning those resources which the Mesa ISAE used (children food, basic food, medicines, free schoolbooks, electricity and water supply payments...), the interviewed persons assess the necessity of offering resources in response to situations of specific needs. The inter-institutional coordination has been an opportunity to offer a wide range of resources to those in situation either or both of poverty or social exclusion, to avoid overlaps and to promote organizational specialization.

E3: The response of the Mesa ISAE succeeds at becoming faster and at getting a reach which for

a growing number of people is broader than if the actuation were individual.

E4: It is appreciated that not only support concerning the individual/familiar sphere but also support concerning collective needs such as the need for school food or schoolbooks.

Concerning the management performed by the Mesa ISAE, all the interviewed persons highlight the engagement and the good internal coordination of this networking system. Establishing formal communication spaces and coordination from a horizontal point of view assure the consolidation of the Mesa ISAE.

E6: As technic staff members, coordination has ruled our teamwork. To that extent, we have held weekly meetings, in which we proposed immediate solutions.

E7: It is important to take into account the component “political will” when we want to undertake this kind of initiatives, because it is a very motivating element for the participating private organisations ... so that goals are agreed instead of being laid out.

E3: As for the directing staff, thanks to the determination to collaborate and to solve arising problems, harmony has reigned among everybody.

Basing on a general discourse analysis, evidence is found of the fact that social actors put in value three remarkable elements: 1) performed management, 2) urgency of the developed response and -last but not least- 3) coordination among the involved social institutions, including not only technic but also directive staff. It is also remarkable that during this period of economy crisis those resources, which were most positively recognized not only by users but also by technic and responsible staff of the Mesa ISAE, have been basic food provision as well as payment for electricity and water supply, for both allocations cover families’ basic needs.

#### 4. Conclusions

The Mesa ISAE was created with the background of the economic crisis (2009) in a context of uncertainty concerning the social wel-

fare system as well and its incapability of giving a response to the increase of social demands. This context of social difficulty has been unprecedented in Spain and has revealed the incapacity of traditional organisation of Primary Attention Social Services and the third sector to slow down that increasing trend of poverty and social exclusion.

The Mesa ISAE has involved an innovative experience of managing and coordinating social action from an inter-institutional and inter-professional point of view. This new way of organising work in the Social Services field is non-exclusive, creates synergies, promotes institutional development from a horizontal axis and gives a comprehensive response to those who are in a situation of social vulnerability.

According to the resulting data, we can observe how, throughout the years, the Mesa ISAE has performed diverse actions aimed at the social protection of families who, in different social spheres, were disadvantaged. Those resources offered by the Primary Attention Social Services (municipal social subsidies and the Community of Valencia’s Minimum Insertion Income) have been strengthened by third sector organisations which carried out immediate actions offering food or paying for electricity and water supply.

The results of our research indicate a difference concerning the profile of the Mesa ISAE’s beneficiaries in comparison in relation with the data of households at risk of poverty provided by the INE and the Community of Valencia. The evidence provided by the most significant data shows that the Mesa ISAE assists mainly two-parental families usually with dependent children. In addition, they are mainly native families. Referring to their socio-demographic profiling, that is the case of those who lost their jobs, run out of the social protection system subsidies offered by different involved organisations and who cannot confront the obligation of covering their basic needs. The Mesa ISAE is meant to assist families which are in a high vulnerability condition and, finally, can suffer the consequences of the social exclusion process.

As for the kind of performed attention (initial or recurrent), we have experienced that networking coordination in applying an emergency resource has allowed those families not to require any other form of social and economic support.

The qualitative analysis gives us evidence that most involved actors value positively the inter-institutional management developed by the Mesa ISAE. It is no coincidence that the interviewed persons lay stress on the fact that coordinated managing of the resources allows them to give an immediate response to the citizenship, to provide an urgent assistance, to intervene socially in shared cases or to satisfy collective needs (school food and school books). This new social working tool is meant to be an opportunity to change traditional work dynamics in the social action field, leads to new approaches to social planning and allows analysing social demands from different perspectives, so that exchange and networking are enhanced.

Concerning our initial hypothesis, we have reached to the final statement that the Mesa ISAE has involved a new work model of coordinated networking which is becoming more stable and gives a global response to citizens. However, the Mesa ISAE has not been able to give a response to the total number of social demands filed by families of the municipality of Elda.

The networking intervention carried out by the Mesa ISAE has allowed such an institutional participation instrument, not only to develop the study and diagnosis of needs, but also to develop the action plan and its performance and, finally, it also allows to develop a

joint assessment. That has entailed very positive consequences, for a significant number of assisted families have overcome that situation of economic precariousness and have received a response concerning their urgent need of social assistance, without having to apply of more stable but also more stigmatized resources like the minimum insertion income.

The Mesa ISAE offers important possibilities. Among them, the most remarkable possibility is participation of new social actors, such as for example representatives of the municipal water supply service, representatives of electricity supply companies, labour counsellors from the unemployment system, municipal housing service, social workers from the health system and, last but not least, social workers from the education system.

There is no doubt that the Mesa ISAE is being a space to generate new projects, which are aimed at tackling social inequality, at reducing poverty of families, at avoiding their dependence from the Social Services public system and at enhancing multidisciplinary coordination among different professionals working in this action field. This networking proposal is dynamic and variable. In fact, new intervention plans are being created to give urgent assistance to those facing eviction, homeless people and those who do not have access to a decent housing.

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