

EAPN: a long-standing experience in lobbying on Structural Funds

Making a difference to tackle exclusion - Since the 90', EAPN has been involved in advocating the European institutions to promote a legal framework for the Structural Fund policy which promotes the fight against poverty and social exclusion. It has also worked closely with National Networks and member organisations to enhance a stronger NGO involvement in the Structural Fund process both at national and European levels, and to provide timely information for a better access of NGOs to all stages of Structural Funds.

EAPN's view on the current programming period 2007-2013

EAPN was rather satisfied with the 2007-2013 structural funds legislative framework, which had picked up some of our amendments to strengthen the social dimension of the Funds and the principle of partnership with civil society. However, the way Structural Funds have been implemented since then led EAPN to adopt a much more critical point of view. From EAPN Members' perspective, since more than two years that the current programming period has been in place, the structural funds have fallen far short of their potential to promote social inclusion. The main reasons are the following:

- A **lack of use of the partnership principle** and the very useful means such as global grants, technical assistance and capacity-building which makes the access to funding complicated for social NGOs
- A **non-satisfactory involvement of social inclusion NGOs in monitoring** which keeps them too far from the decision-making process
- A **weak transnational dimension** which results from the failure to mainstream the EQUAL programme
- A **weakened structural funds management** which prevents the European commission from having an effective oversight on the Structural Funds and their contribution to social inclusion.
- A **slow and incomplete reorientation** of Cohesion Policy in response to the economic crisis

EAPN's key actions and messages for the Post 2013

Positioning EAPN as a key actor

At EU level, EAPN started lobbying on the design of the new round of Structural Funds far ahead of the Commission's proposals, trying to influence the European Commission before the drafting of the Structural Funds' Regulations.

- **At EU level**

- [EAPN reacted to the Commission's legislative proposals](#)
- Proposals for amendments were sent to the relevant Rapporteurs and Shadow Rapporteurs.
- This work has been then followed up by an alliance-building work with the setting up of the joint campaign [EU Money for Poverty Reduction NOW!](#) to defend the "minimum shares" for ESF (i.e. a minimum budget of at least 25% of the Cohesion Policy financial envelope to the ESF, and at least 20% of the ESF earmarked for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion).
- This has been accompanied by targeted lobbying work on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (2014-2020), to make sure that Cohesion Policy will still be adequately funded.
- EAPN, together with some of its member EOs, (like Eurodiaconia, Caritas Europa, FEBA and FEANTSA) and the Red Cross - EU Office, has been lobbying on the continuation of the Food Aid Programme.

- **At national level**, EAPN also works together with its National Networks, to help them get involved from the start of the design of the Partnership Contracts and Operational Programmes. A Toolkit was published in October 2012 to help social NGOs make sure that the poverty reduction target is well reflected in Structural Funds in their countries.

EAPN key messages

For EAPN, Cohesion Policy should promote a comprehensive and integrated delivery of the poverty reduction target as following:

- **Defend the Commission's proposal on the EU Budget**, to ensure that Structural Funds will fully deliver on the poverty reduction target.
- **Give strong backing to the minimum share of at least 25%** of the Structural Funds budget for the European Social Fund (ESF).
- **The 20% earmarking mechanism should be used in all OPs** to reduce poverty and social exclusion, delivering on the poverty reduction target, and to promote integrated Active Inclusion approaches (access to quality jobs and quality services, and support to adequate minimum income), rather than purely negative activation policies.
- Establish clear **Commission guidelines for Member States** on how Structural Funds should deliver **on the poverty reduction target**, through integrated and socially inclusive approaches, (particularly through Active Inclusion) for ESF, ERDF and other Cohesion Funds.
- **Strengthen the partnership principle at all stages of the Structural Funds process** (both for Partnership Contracts and Operational Programmes), with all partners on an equal footing, including by backing the European Code of Conduct on partnership, and make the Funds accessible for small NGOs (with tailor-made grants and Technical Assistance schemes).
- **Ensure a proper monitoring process of the effective use of Structural Funds in Europe 2020**, in both NRPs and National Social Reports, in their contribution to the delivery on the social targets.
- Give **equal importance to each Europe 2020 headline target** in all Structural Funds.
- **Solidarity with poorer regions, not double penalty! – NO to macro-economic conditionality, but favour binding social ex-ante conditionalities** on social inclusion & poverty reduction, gender mainstreaming, anti-discrimination and disability, so as to make sure from the start that all the programmes will be socially inclusive.
- Develop a **social inclusion mainstreaming clause and a social evaluation system**, based on hard and soft social indicators.