

TOOLKIT ON STRUCTURAL FUNDS FOR SOCIAL NGOS

*Pushing for the poverty reduction target
of the Europe 2020 Strategy
to be reflected in Operational Programmes
(OPs) and Partnership Contracts (PCs)
at national and regional levels*

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INTRODUCTION

On the 6th of October 2011, the European Commission published its legislative proposals regarding the next programming period of Structural Funds (2014-2020)¹.

This proposal confirms that Cohesion Policy will play a decisive role in delivering on all the Europe 2020 targets (for more information, see Section 1).

EAPN welcomed² the Commission's proposal as a major step forward, by making **Structural Funds a powerful instrument to deliver on the social targets of Europe 2020, and especially the poverty reduction target.**

The Draft Regulations are being discussed by the Council and the European Parliament. The final adoption is expected by the end of the year.

But without waiting for this final step, competent public authorities in some Member States have already started to launch informal consultation processes to start drafting their Partnership Contracts (PCs) and Operational Programmes (OPs).

SCOPE

It is **very timely for National Networks to start getting involved in the next programming period of Structural Funds**, so as to influence their National Authorities (competent ministries like Finance, Employment and Social Affairs...), as well as the European Commission (via the Desk Officers for each country) on the drafting of the Operational Programmes and the Partnership Contracts.

OBJECTIVES

This toolkit aims to support the advocacy work of National Networks and social NGOs, in order to help them to press their National Authorities to prioritise the new social targets of Europe 2020, and especially the poverty reduction target, both in the Partnership Contracts and Operational Programmes.

This Toolkit pursues **3 objectives**:

1. To provide a **better understanding** of the main characteristics of the future Structural Funds Regulations for the programming period 2014-2020.
2. To **support National Networks in getting involved in the Structural Funds' process, and in making the best use of the new Europe 2020 Strategy, and the poverty reduction target.** This is why this Toolkit provides useful advice/tips, and showcases good practices, successfully developed by NGOs in different EU countries.

¹ Proposals for Regulations: [Common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund](#); [European Social Fund](#); [Cohesion Fund](#); [European Regional Development Fund](#); [European Globalisation Adjustment Fund](#); [European Union Programme for Social Change and Innovation](#); [European Territorial Cooperation](#); [European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation](#), 06.10.2011.

² EAPN Response to the Commission's draft legislative package for the EU Cohesion Policy (2014-2020): <http://www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EAPN-position-papers-and-reports/2012-eapn-response-to-the-commissions-legislative-package-on-sf-en.pdf>

3. Ultimately, to **help National Networks to be seen as key interlocutors** by competent public authorities on the next programming period of Structural Funds from the beginning.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience is twofold:

- Primarily, **all National Networks** coordinating the advocacy work on Structural Funds at the national level;
- Also, **members and individual NGOs involved in the Structural Funds' process**, by getting involved in monitoring committees, or applying to run projects funded by Structural Funds.

WHY MUST SOCIAL NGOS BE INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATING STRUCTURAL FUNDS

Social NGOs' demand to participate directly in the negotiation of the future Structural Funds has been **legitimized by both the legal basis of these Funds, as well as the Europe 2020**. It can be summarized as follows:

- **Cohesion Policy is at the heart of the core principles that underpin the European Union** (including social cohesion). The European Social Fund (ESF) was established as an instrument for investing in human resources. It has been seen from the beginning in a wider perspective, as a Fund promoting integrated pathways to employment, social participation, and inclusion.
- The new **Europe 2020 Strategy** has given even more importance to the role that **Structural Funds** will have to play, through **the delivery of the 5 headline targets**, including the social targets (education, employment, and particularly poverty reduction).
- To fulfil its mission, **Cohesion Policy must reduce inequalities between regions but also citizens**, especially **the groups that many NGOs work with and for**: long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities, children and young people without qualifications, single-parent families, people with disabilities, and migrants, to name just a few.
- Given their **knowledge of the needs of the most vulnerable groups of people and how to reach them**, social NGOs should participate in all stages of the processes of Structural Funds (preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).
- **Social NGOs are strongly concerned about how to improve and include in their projects the leading principles applying to Structural Funds:**
 - Socially integrated approaches for combating poverty and social exclusion (via integrated Active Inclusion approaches)
 - Promotion of social innovation
 - Gender equality
 - Fight against discrimination.
 - Local development, in collaboration with all the relevant actors, including public authorities, trade-unions...
 - Respect for the environment.

- The reinforcement of access to information technology for disadvantaged groups, to prevent the digital divide.
- Social NGOs have shown their **ability to successfully run projects** with a multi-fund approach (both ESF-ERDF), and get **significant positive outcomes in the field of employment and social inclusion**, as it was reported in many documents published by the Commission.

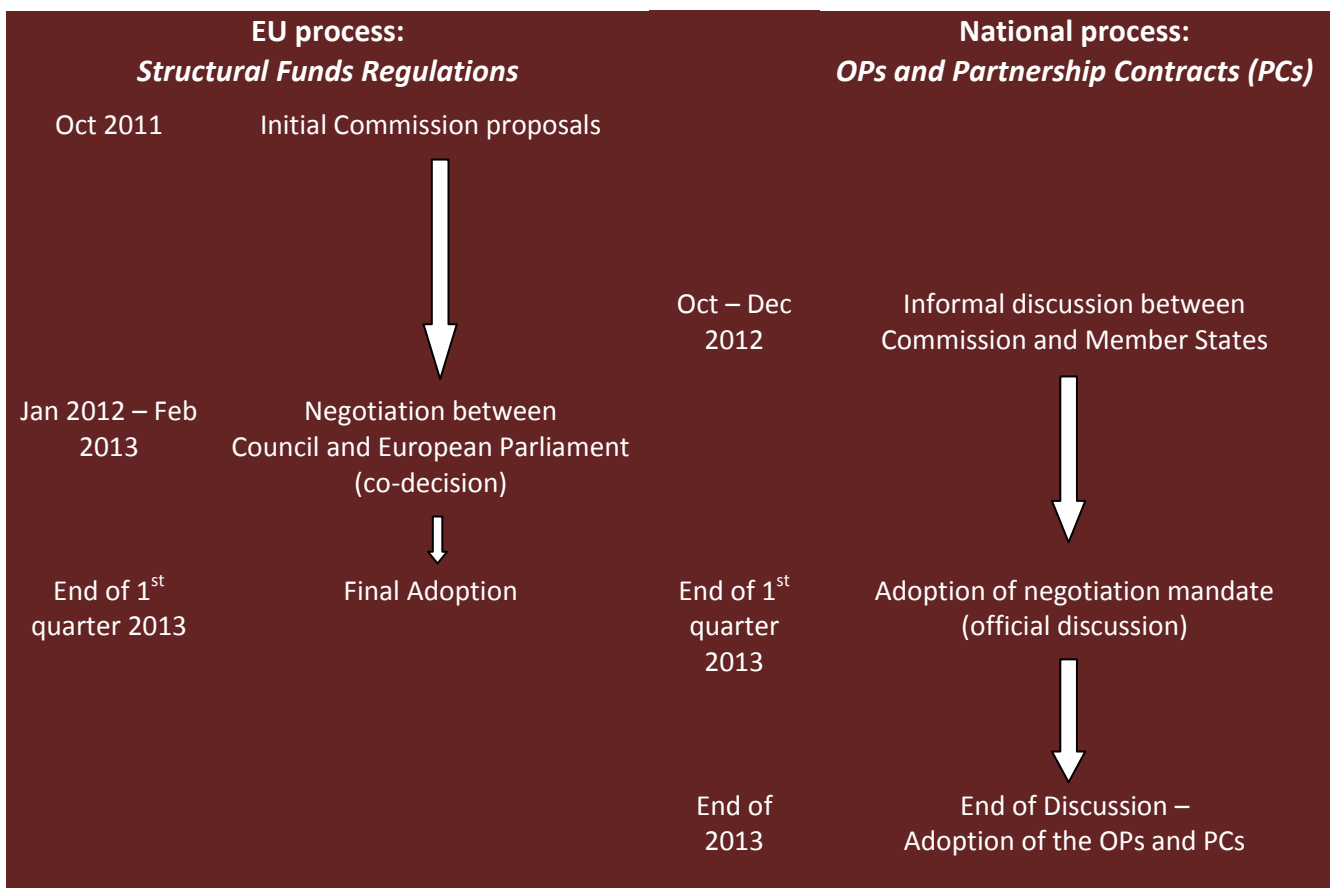
This toolkit was developed by the EAPN Structural Funds Task Force, operating in the framework of the EAPN EU Inclusion Strategies Group. It was coordinated by Vincent Caron, EAPN Policy Officer with the support of the EAPN Policy Team (Sian Jones, Policy Coordinator and Amana Ferro, Policy Officer) and produced by Nellie Epinat, EAPN Communications Officer.

National good practices were provided by Rosalia Guntin, Carolina Fernandez from EAPN Spain, Andreas Bartels, from EAPN Germany and Reka Tunyogi, Dilyana Giteva, from Eurochild.

SECTION 1

THE PROVISIONAL EU FRAMEWORK - THE NEXT PROGRAMMING PERIOD IN A NUTSHELL

In this first section, the aim is to provide the most updated information about the current state of play of the discussions on the future Cohesion Policy post-2013, starting with the Commission's legislative proposals (1.1), and subsequently detailing the main points of the most recent developments at Parliament and Council levels (1.2).



1.1. THE BASIS: THE COMMISSION'S LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

In October 2011, the European Commission released the draft Cohesion Policy Package, which includes all the draft Regulations for all Structural Funds.

1.1.1. RATIONALE AND KEY FIGURES

Key figures: a divergent picture

- **A decrease of 5.3% in the total budget for Structural Funds: 336 EUR billion** against 354.8 EUR billion (for the current programming period 2007-2013). *This decrease is inconsistent with the June Council Conclusions, which clearly recognized Cohesion Policy as a major instrument for supporting the 3 pillars of Europe 2020: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Even more worrying, a group of 7 Member States (mostly the so-called “net contributors”: Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK) are pushing for a reduction of the Cohesion Policy budget. Nevertheless, for some others (including Spain, Portugal, Poland, and Greece) the amounts for Cohesion Policy are too low.*
- **An increase of the minimum overall share for the ESF of 25% of the budget allocated to Cohesion Policy: 84 EUR billion.** Minimum shares for the European Social Fund will be established for each category of regions (25% for convergence regions; 40% for transition regions; and 52% for competitiveness regions). *This minimum share is currently under threat, due to the rejection by the vast majority of Member States (BG and IT excepted).*
- **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) budget: 183.3 EUR billion.**

The objective is to reach an agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020) (see glossary of terms) by the end of this year.

The future of Cohesion Policy: backing the Europe 2020 targets

The future of Cohesion Policy will have **a key role to play in contributing to the achievement of the new targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy**³. An increased thematic concentration of resources on fewer priorities is proposed. A reinforced strategic programming, a more strategic negotiation process and follow up are aimed for, translating the Europe 2020 targets into a comprehensive investment strategy. Member States will have to define their national strategy for Cohesion Policy, in line with National Reform Programmes (NRPs). To strengthen the performance of Cohesion Policy, conditionalities and incentives could be introduced, as well as a more result-oriented approach.

Delivering on the poverty reduction target

Cohesion Policy has a major role to play in contributing to the achievement of the social targets of Europe 2020, by ensuring in all Structural Funds **a proper mainstreaming of poverty and social inclusion, a meaningful partnership principle**, involving NGOs in the decision-making process of Structural Funds, as well as an **easier access to Structural Funds for NGOs**, especially the small ones.

The main novelties for aligning Structural Funds with Europe 2020

⇒ **A simplified architecture: 2 goals: “Investments in Growth and Jobs” and “European Territorial Cooperation”**, with 3 categories of regions:

³ More information in the Glossary of Terms.

- 1) Less developed (convergence) regions (less than 75% of the average GDP of the EU27)
- 2) Transition regions (GDP between 75% and 90% of the EU 27 average)
- 3) More developed (competitiveness) regions (GDP above 90% of the EU 27 average)

⇒ **A strategic approach**, linking the Europe 2020 Strategy to Cohesion Policy:

- A Common Strategic Framework, translating the objectives and targets of Europe 2020 into key actions for all the Funds.
- Partnership contracts drawn up by Member States in cooperation with partners, setting out the indicative allocation of support by the EU by thematic objective, at national level, for each of the Funds.
- Operational Programmes.

⇒ **Co-financing rate**, depending on the level of each priority axis, up to 75% in less developed regions, 60% in transition regions, and 50% in more developed regions. But modulation is possible, according to the importance of the priority axis and the gaps to be addressed.

1.1.2. A HIGHER PROFILE GIVEN TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

The role of Structural Funds in the Flagship Initiative

The European Platform against Poverty (EPAP) *(see Glossary of Terms)*

The EPAP makes the use of Structural Funds one of its five key priorities: “Greater and more effective use of EU funds to support social inclusion.”¹

Commitments have been made to dedicate adequate financial resources to social inclusion and poverty reduction, as well to simplify the access and delivery for the ESF for small NGOs, through easier access to Global Grants, and improved access to funds for groups with multiple disadvantages, and at high risk of poverty.

1) **In the General Regulation**

- **Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty** is listed as the 9th thematic objective.
- The promotion of **equality between women and men, non-discrimination**, as well as **sustainable development** are listed as horizontal principles.
- A good profile is given to **social ex-ante conditionalities**:
 - A detailed ex-ante conditionality, related to the poverty reduction target, with 2 strands: Active Inclusion and health. The one on Active Inclusion entails the integration of marginalised communities, requiring a national strategy for poverty reduction, with a wide implementation of the partnership principle, from the design, with measures extending employment opportunities to disadvantaged groups, ensuring a shift towards community-based care, and preventing and combating segregation; a Roma Inclusion strategy; support given to relevant stakeholders in accessing Funds).
 - Anti-discrimination, gender equality and disability are included in the list of ex-ante conditionalities.

- **Rural dimension:** not well-enough reflected. The main reference about rural poverty is within the investment priority “Support for physical and economic regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities”.

2) **ESF as THE Fund to deliver on the poverty reduction target**

The ESF has seen its role increased in reducing poverty and social exclusion through:

- **Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty clearly identified as one of the four thematic objectives:** through *Active Inclusion*, the integration of marginalized communities, but also through combating discrimination, enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high quality services, promoting social economy and social enterprises, and community-led local development strategies.
- **A minimum ring-fencing allocation of 20% dedicated to promoting social inclusion and combating poverty.**
- **Integrated pathway approaches, combining various forms of employability measures,** such as individualised support, counselling, guidance, access to general and vocational education and training, as well as access to services, notably health and social services, child care, and internet services.
- **The promotion of social innovation** (testing and scaling-up innovative solutions to address social needs).

The Common Strategic Framework (CSF) and the role of ESF role in reducing poverty

- ✓ Promotion of Active Inclusion with integrated pathways to employment and social and reforms to improve the cost-effectiveness and adequacy of social and unemployment benefits, minimum income schemes (as complementary measure in the framework of an integrated pathway approach to the labour market and limited to the duration of activation measures) pensions, health and social services...
- ✓ Support for a wide range of other “indicative actions of high European value”, in the following fields: integration of marginalised communities such as Roma (integrated pathways to the labour market, access to social services, healthcare...); combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest, promoting social economy and social enterprises...

3) **ERDF: 3 “social-oriented” priorities**

- **Promoting employment and labour mobility** (although there is no mention of quality work or ensuring access for disadvantaged groups).
- **Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty** (investment in health and social infrastructure; physical and economic regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities including affordable housing; support for social enterprises).
- **Investments in skills, education and lifelong learning,** by developing education infrastructures.

The CSF and the role of ERDF role in reducing poverty

Investment in health and social infrastructures to improve access to health and social services and reduce health inequalities, with special attention to marginalised groups such as the Roma and those at risk of poverty.

Support infrastructure investment in childcare, elderly care and long-term care.

Support for investment in social housing for marginalised communities like the Roma and the homeless, in the framework of integrated plans, with interventions in education, health including sport facilities for local residents, and employment.

Support specific investment targeted to remove and prevent accessibility barriers.

1.1.3. A better promotion of NGO involvement

1) *In the General Regulations: a more assertive partnership principle*

- **NGOs shall be involved in the preparation of Partnership Contracts, progress reports as well as in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Operational Programmes** (including the participation in Monitoring Committees).
- Setting up by the Commission of a **European European Code of Conduct on Partnership**.

This is a document which lays down minimum requirements as regards:

- Which partners to select (for NGOs, there is a possibility to establish coordination platforms - a common representative - including the most representative NGOs).
- The involvement of partners in the design process (including the establishment of clear rules and timeline, the list of actions taken to involve partners and their role).
- The involvement of partners in the implementation phase (composition of the Monitoring Committees, voting rights for each member etc).
- The involvement of partners in the evaluation process (establishment of terms of reference; evaluation of the effectiveness of the partnership principle, etc).
- The assistance given to partners (Member States to use part of their Technical Assistance to ensure the full involvement of small NGOs through the whole Structural Funds process).

However, most Member States do not want to make this document binding.

- **Technical Assistance:**
 - For the European Commission specifically, and for its own purpose (to finance studies, reports, expert meetings...).
 - For Member States - it is still up to the Member States to decide how they will use it. So, it is at national level where Managing Authorities could make Technical Assistance available to NGOs. For more information on the use of Technical Assistance by NGOs during the current programming period, see Chapter 3, *NGOs using Funds for Social Inclusion*, as well as the see *Glossary of Terms*, and the [EAPN Structural Funds manual 2009-2011](#), p. 28-30)
- **Global Grants:** it is also still up to the Member State or the Managing Authorities to make Global Grants accessible to NGOs. For more information about Global Grants managed by NGOs, see Chapter 3, *NGOs using Funds for Social Inclusion*,

as well as the see *Glossary of Terms*, and the [EAPN Structural Funds manual 2009-2011](#), p. 24-25).

- **Promoting territorial development through community-led local development, designed and implemented by local action groups** (representatives of the public and private local socio-economic interests, including NGOs, like in the LEADER axis of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), **with integrated local development strategies**, taking into account local needs and potential, and including innovative features in the local context.
- **Simplified delivery system:** encourage and facilitate the use of flat rates and lump sums for small projects.

2) In the ESF

- **An attempt to facilitate transnational co-operation** through mutual learning and coordinated or joint action.
- **Giving effectiveness to the partnership principle:** explicit reference to NGOs as relevant partners for the implementation of the Operational Programmes, with a possible use of Global Grants and capacity building (but only in less developed regions).

1.1.4. SOME WORRYING STRUCTURAL CHANGES

- **Introduction of macro-economic conditionalities** prior to the disbursement of Funds. For Member States facing excessive budget deficits and, thus, not complying with the Growth and Stability Pact rules, Structural Funds could be suspended by the European Commission.
- **A growing focus on thematic concentration**, whose level depends on the categories of regions concerned, and which could lead to prioritising growth-enhancing objectives (competitiveness of SMEs, innovation, energy efficiency, ICT...), as opposed to social objectives, leading to a narrow focus on the “growth and jobs”-only model.

1.2. THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL: WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Once the Commission’s legislative proposals have been presented, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union started discussing, at the end of 2011, the future Structural Funds Regulations. The final adoption of these Regulations is not foreseen before the end of this year (2012), because there are conflicting views on some important issues between the two EU institutions.

1.2.1. AT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (EP) LEVEL

In short, the European Parliament has been so far **very supportive** of the Commission’s legislative proposals, especially when it comes to **supporting social inclusion and the fight against poverty in Structural Funds, as well as NGO involvement**.

Relevant EP Reports have been adopted, respectively in the EMPL Committee for the [ESF Report](#) (*Rapporteur* Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, EPP), in the REGI Committee for the [Report on the Common Provisions](#) (*Co-Rapporteurs* Lambert Van Nistelrooij, EPP and Constanze Angela Krehl, S&D) and the [ERDF Report](#) (*Rapporteur* Jan Olbrycht, EPP) before the summer break. All three Reports should be voted in plenary by the beginning of 2013.

The most striking points on the EP Reports are the following:

Positive aspects:

- The unanimous rejection of macro-economic conditionality.
- The backing given to the minimum budget for the ESF, and the 20% of the ESF earmarked for social inclusion and poverty reduction.
- The explicit reference to the European Code of Conduct on partnership.
- The extension of capacity building for NGOs to transition regions, in the ESF Report.
- An additional investment priority under the thematic objective “Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty”: “promoting children’s rights and well-being”.

Unfortunately:

- The distinction made between local and regional authorities and socio-economic and NGO actors risks diluting the potentially strong role foreseen for NGOs under the partnership principle, as proposed by the Commission;
- The greater flexibility given to Member States with regard to the minimum budget for the ESF in the less developed regions allows the 25% to be reached at national level, rather than for each region. This will be discussed by the Commission and Member States while negotiating the partnership contracts.

1.2.2. LATEST VERSION OF THE COUNCIL POSITION ON THE EC LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

A partial agreement was achieved during the General Affairs Council meeting on the 26th of June. All the different elements (thematic concentration, financial instruments, performance framework...) are available in the following press release [here](#).

The following elements are very worrying:

- **The reference to the minimum budget for the ESF has been deleted**, and replaced by minimum shares set for the common thematic objectives of Structural Funds on employment, social inclusion and education. **The reference to the 20% of the ESF earmarked for social inclusion** and poverty reduction remains, but it is now **accompanied by a new option left to Member States**, who are now able to deduct the resources allocated from the ERDF to the thematic objective on social inclusion as a way of complying with the minimum share.

This change has been introduced so as to ensure a maximum flexibility in the use of Structural Funds at national level. The impact is that Member States could count the ERDF money used under the thematic objective on social inclusion in deduction of those minimum shares. Given the big part of the budget dedicated to ERDF, it could lead to marginalizing the ESF and diminishing to a great extent its binding minimum contribution to social inclusion and poverty reduction. It would also imply that Member States could prioritize ERDF funding for big infrastructures (i.e. housing) to fulfil the poverty reduction target, rather than for human resources/services, via the ESF.

- **The watering down of the social ex-ante conditionalities:** the anti-poverty one is purely limited to employment-related measures; the involvement of partners is pretty vague; references to anti-discrimination, gender equality and disability have been deleted, and the role of the Commission as watchdog has been reduced.

- **The weakening of the partnership principle:** the Council rejected the binding nature of the partnership principle and rendered it (by replacing 'shall' with 'may' in the text), and deleted the reference to the European Code of Conduct on partnership.

To sum up, from this Autumn, a battle between the European Parliament and the Council is gearing up.

SECTION 2

EAPN KEY POSITIONS AND ACTIONS

Since the 90s, EAPN has been involved in lobbying the EU institutions to promote a legal framework for Structural Funds, which places the fight against poverty and social exclusion at its core. EAPN National Networks and European Organisations worked closely to for a stronger NGO involvement in the Structural Funds process, at national and European level, and to provide timely information for a better access of NGOs to all stages of Structural Funds.

2.1. EAPN'S VIEW ON THE CURRENT PROGRAMMING PERIOD 2007-2013

EAPN was quite 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 has led EAPN to adopt a much more critical point of view. From EAPN members' perspective, during the current programming period, **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 of the very useful funding instruments, such as the Global Grants.
- A lack of use of 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, because of the failure to mainstream the EQUAL programme.
- A weak Structural Funds management, which prevents the European Commission from having an effective oversight on Structural Funds and their contribution to social inclusion.
- A slow and incomplete reorientation of Cohesion Policy in response to the economic crisis.

2.2. EAPN DELIVERABLES

To help National Networks get involved at all stages of the Structural Funds processes, EAPN produced the following specific documents:

⇒ On the past and current programming period

- **EAPN Structural Funds Manual:** 3 editions have been produced.
 - 2009: [EAPN Structural Funds Manual 2009-2011](#) (EN/FR).
 - 2006: Manual on the management of the European Union Structural Funds, 2nd edition (available in EN, FR, PT, PL, HU and BG – click [here](#)).
 - 1999: 1st edition (ask the EAPN Secretariat for more details).
- **A survey assessing the contribution of Structural Funds to social inclusion**, October 2009 - [The contribution of Cohesion Policy to social inclusion - What role for social NGOs? EAPN mid-term assessment of the current programming period and perspective for post-2013](#) (EN/FR)
- **A Guide on Social Inclusion Indicators**, January 2008 - [Developing social inclusion indicators for the structural funds - EAPN Guide for social inclusion NGOs and other Monitoring Committee members](#) (EN/FR)

⇒ On the next programming period (2014-2020)

- [A Response to the Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion of the European Commission](#) (EN, IT), January 2011.
- **EAPN's views on the Commission's legislative proposals for the next programming period:** [EAPN Response to the Commission's legislative package for the EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020](#)
- [***The ongoing Joint Campaign EU Money for Poverty Reduction NOW!***](#)



The ongoing Joint Campaign

EU Money for Poverty Reduction NOW!

EAPN, together with 17 other social NGOs, are running the campaign ***EU Money for Poverty Reduction NOW!***, to urge Member States to respect their commitments to reduce poverty, by ensuring that the necessary EU funds are allocated for social inclusion and fighting poverty.

In October 2011, the European Commission proposed the draft Regulation for the next Round of Cohesion Policy. In its proposal, a minimum share of 25% of the Cohesion Policy budget is devoted to the European Social Fund (ESF), and at least 20% of the ESF is earmarked for social inclusion and fighting poverty. This was widely welcomed by social NGOs as a concrete proposal to give credence to the poverty reduction target agreed by EU leaders as an integral part of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Incredibly, 26 out of 27 Member States seem ready to reject this proposal.

The Campaign ***EU Money for Poverty Reduction NOW!***, launched by social NGOs, seeks to secure:

- The allocation of at least 25% of the Cohesion Policy budget to the European Social Fund (ESF);
- The earmarking of at least 20% of the ESF to social inclusion and poverty reduction.

⇒ The **website** for the campaign is here ([EN/FR](#)).

⇒ Alongside initiatives at EU and national level, carried out by the NGOs involved, this campaign aims at gathering as much support as possible through the **petition on AVAAZ** ([EN/FR/ES/DE/PT/IT](#)).

⇒ A **campaign leaflet** is also available ([EN/FR/DE/ES/IT/NL/EE/PT](#)).

SECTION 3

TIPS / ADVICE

3.1. KNOW YOUR INTERLOCUTORS

The most immediate step is **to contact your National Authorities** (both Ministries of Finance and/or in charge of Social Affairs (ESF) and Regional Development (ERDF)) to find out how they are developing the process and what the potential is for engagement, either in making a contribution, responding to a consultation, inviting representatives to a meeting etc. In some Member States, informal consultations with public/regional authorities and bodies have already started. So, please **contact your Desk Officers** to get the views of the Commission in your country so as to use it towards your national Governments, **as soon as possible**. Please find below the list of heads of units in DG REGIO (ERDF) and EMPL (ESF). They will help you to find the Desk Officer who is in charge of your own country.

CONTACT DETAILS AT EU LEVEL

List of Head of Units (DG EMPL and DG REGIO)

Head of Units	DG REGIO	Head of Units	DG EMPL
BELGIUM, FRANCE, LUXEMBURG	german.granda@ec.europa.eu	BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS, FRANCE, LUXEMBURG	themistoklis.galeros@ec.europa.eu
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For more information on your desk officers, please click [here](#).

CONTACT DETAILS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

⇒ If you want to find your ESF Managing Authority, please click [here](#).

⇒ If you want to find your ERDF Managing Authority, please click [here](#).

3.2. GET INFORMED

All the information and updates at EU level are easily available from the following websites:

⇒ For the **legislative proposals of the European Commission**, here are the weblinks to:

- The draft Common Strategic Framework ([Part I](#), [Part II](#))
- [The European Code of Conduct](#) (Commission Staff Working Document)
- [The draft common provisions on Structural Funds](#)
- [The draft ESF Regulation](#)
- [The draft ERDF Regulation](#)
- [The draft Cohesion Fund Regulation](#)

For the draft Regulations of all the other Structural Funds, if you want to get more information, please click [here](#).

⇒ **For the EP reports:**

- [Report on the Common Provisions of all Structural Funds](#) (Lambert van Nistelrooij, EPP & Constanze Angela Krehl, S&D).
- [ESF Report](#) (Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, EPP).
- [ERDF Report](#) (Jan Olbrycht, EPP).

⇒ **Latest version of the Council position on the EC legislative proposals** (adopted during the General Affairs Council meeting on the 26th of June). All the different elements (thematic concentration, financial instruments, performance framework...) are available in the following press release [here](#).

At national level, it is crucial to ask for a transparent consultation process, with a clear timeline, and demand as much opportunities as possible to get involved.

3.3. ANALYSE DELIVERY AND KNOW THE PROCESS

First, it is very important to **identify the weaknesses of your own country in its use of Structural Funds to deliver on the social targets of Europe 2020** (poverty reduction, employment and education). Structural Funds will indeed be tied with either the National Reform Programmes, or the Country-Specific Recommendations (the choice will be made once a final agreement is reached on the macro-economic conditionality).

In that regard, three sources could be used to help your work:

- EAPN Report: [An EU worth defending – Beyond austerity to social investment and inclusive growth: EAPN analysis of the 2012 National Reform Programmes \(NRPs\) and National Social Reports \(NSRs\)](#) (in particular pages 58-65). To assess these weaknesses, the two following questions could guide you in this work:
 - **How far are Structural Funds used to support delivery on the poverty? And the other social targets? i.e. employment and education targets? Is more attention given to one or other of the targets?**
 - **How far do Structural Funds support effective integrated approaches to social inclusion? (i.e. integrated Active Inclusion approaches, supporting access to quality work, adequate minimum income, learning, but also access to quality services?)**
- [The EAPN Proposals for Country-Specific Recommendations on the NRPs 2012](#). Structural Funds should be used by Member States to support the macro-economic, employment and social policies, so as to deliver on the social targets of Europe 2020.
- The [Commission's country factsheets](#), outlining the progress made by Member States in meeting the Europe 2020 targets. Please see above the link to all the 27 country factsheets, which will serve as support in the negotiation between the European Commission and Member States designing the Operational Programmes and Partnership Contracts).

DG REGIO has coordinated (with the inputs of DG AGRI, MARE, REGIO and EMPL for the social inclusion and employment aspects) the drafting of **Commission position papers for each Member State**, which are supposed to launch the informal discussion with Member States in the autumn of this year, in advance of the planned adoption of the Operational Programmes and Partnership Contracts. This document will guide Member States on the future programme structures and priorities. It will also prepare the negotiation mandate, which will underpin the discussion between the Commission and each Member State about the Operational Programmes.

Provisional Timeline

- ⇒ **October-December:** Discussions with each Member State, on the basis of the Commission position paper.
- ⇒ **By the end of 2012:** Agreement expected within the Council on the EU Budget and Cohesion Policy.
- ⇒ **January-February 2013:** Vote on the Structural Funds Regulation (Common Provisions, ESF, ERDF...) in the plenary of the European Parliament.
- ⇒ **1st quarter of 2013:** Adoption of the Regulations and CSF, adoption of the negotiation mandate as Staff Working Document.

3.4. DEVELOP A LOBBYING STRATEGY

If you want to be more successful in influencing your National Authorities, a lobbying strategy would be very beneficial and could involve

- **Clarify your objectives:** what do you want concretely to achieve? (develop shadow Operational Programmes, key messages, be part of an Operational Programme working group, respond to a national consultation process...).
- **Identify key targets** and timing for your inputs: **the sooner the better.** Informal consultations have already been launched in some Member States for a few months now.
- **Develop your own shadow Operational Programmes/messages:** based on the aforementioned analysis, you could then develop your own shadow OPs/key messages, to make very clear to the competent ministries and authorities what are your key concerns and demands. In that regard, you will find in the Annex a template fiche, which gives you some proposals on how to translate the poverty reduction target in your OPs. You can adapt the EAPN Key Messages (provided in Section 5) according to your national circumstances and realities.
- **How do you want to proceed? Let's be proactive!**
 - **Involve your members** (NGOs or regional networks) by organizing training sessions...
 - **Identify key allies** (other social or environmental NGO networks, social partners, local authorities...), share information, see what are potential common points to develop joint actions.
 - **Develop joint initiatives:** contact your National Authorities, organize meetings, set up a shadow Monitoring Committee...

Some EAPN National Networks, like Spain and Germany, have already been successful in influencing from the start the design of the Operational Programmes, during the current programming period of Structural Funds, by developing a coordinated lobbying strategy. You can get inspired by these examples and/or contact them directly. For more information, please see Section 4 of this toolkit on *Successful case studies*.

SECTION 4

SHOWCASING GOOD PRACTICES

Getting involved in negotiation processes at national level remains a major challenge for social NGOs. Nevertheless, during the current programming period 2007-2013, a few NGO-driven initiatives successfully ensured that the NGO sector achieved a strategic positioning in their respective countries in the design of Structural Funds programmes, with the aim to better promote social inclusion. In this section, you will find 3 good practices of NGO involvement in these negotiation processes, at different levels:

- The establishment of a European network, aiming at promoting the use of Structural Funds for Roma Inclusion (Case study 1: **EURoma / Fundación Secretariado Gitano in Spain**).
- The setting up of a special ESF sub-program for staff in social services, accompanied by a support service (Case study 2: **Tail Wind in Germany**).
- The participation in the elaboration process of a new Operational Programme on Human Resources Development (**Case Study 3: National Network for Children in Bulgaria**).

By showcasing these good practices, EAPN would like to give you a snapshot of what you can ask for from your Managing Authorities, so as to make sure that the poverty reduction target will be reflected at strategic level in this new programming period of Structural Funds, through a really participative and bottom-up process.

I. Fundación Secretariado Gitano, EURoma Network

Name and network: Carolina Fernández, Head of the Technical Secretariat / Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) / EURoma Network (*European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds*).

Contact details: carolina.fernandez@gitanos.org / info@euromanet.eu / www.euromanet.eu

Brief Description

FSG (a Spanish NGO working on Roma issues for 30 years) proposed to the Spanish ESF Managing Authority (MA) in 2007 to jointly launch a network, with the aim of promoting the use of the Structural Funds for Roma inclusion, based on the Spanish experience of the use of Funds for this purpose through the OP *Fight against Discrimination* 2000-2006. FSG, as Intermediate Body of the OP Technical Assistance and Transnational and Interregional Cooperation 2007-2013, acts as Technical Secretariat.

EURoma started working in 2008, and is composed of 12 Member States (those with higher percentage of Roma population). Members of the network are public administrations: ESF MAs (more recently, also ERDF MA) and public bodies responsible for Roma issues. The European Commission has a key role in the network, through sustained participation and inputs (DG EMPL, DG REGIO, and DG JUST).

Key objectives of the network: support the idea of Structural Funds not merely as a financial instrument, but as a policy-shaping instrument, a driver of the mainstreaming of Roma issues in broader policies; making progress on building a common approach to Roma inclusion on Structural Funds MA; greater effectiveness and impact of the Funds' interventions with Roma, achievement of results on the ground.

The added value of the network

- Place Roma issues on the agenda of the Structural Funds MA and provide them with substance.
- Effective sharing of strategies, initiatives and approaches, both horizontally (between Member States, between different executive agencies) and vertically (between administrative levels), to ensure better coordination and synergies, and to ensure that the Funds reach the local level and achieve positive change in the living conditions of Roma.
- Reach out to civil society actors, local/regional administrations and international organisations, to build a dynamic engagement of stakeholders within and beyond the network itself.

EURoma has elaborated **concrete products and tools** to realise the aforementioned aspirations:

- EURoma mid-term report (2010) analysing the use of SF for Roma inclusion, and different management models in member countries, as well as making proposals to the EU and Member States.
- Policy papers, background papers and information sheets on Member States' managing models of Structural Funds in relation to Roma; ethnic data collection issues; references to Structural Funds in the Member States' respective National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS); national and local best practices.
- Position papers on the coming programming period and on the NRIS.
- Manual and guides for the use of Structural Funds for projects aimed at Roma inclusion by municipal and regional authorities (publication pending 2012); and to improve the planning process in the current and next Structural Funds programming period (end of 2012).

The main obstacles encountered

As concerns Structural Funds and Roma inclusion: lack of political interest; gap between planning and implementation as regards the use of the Funds for Roma inclusion; limited coordination between key stakeholders; lack of administrative and management capacity of those actors better positioned to reach Roma population (NGOs, local administrations).

As concerns the network itself: Lack of political commitment at the highest level; strong involvement and commitment from individuals representing the MA in the network, but limited institutional impact of network's activities and learning in the MA as a whole (difficulties to reach policy makers and, therefore, influence policy decisions).

II. Germany, ESF sub-programme ‘Tail Wind’

Name and network: Andreas Bartels, Workers’ Welfare Association (AWO), member of the ESF Monitoring Committee in Germany and responsible for the realisation of the ESF sub programme ‘Tail Wind’ – for staff in social services for the Federal Association of Non Statutory Welfare in Germany (www.bagfw.de)

Contact details: Andreas Bartels, Senior Expert for European Affairs, Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband e.V. - andreas.bartels@awo.org / www.awo.org.

ESF support office, Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege e. V. Oranienburger Str. 13-14, 10178 Berlin, Germany - regiestelle@bag-wohlfahrt.de / www.bagfw-esf.de

Brief Description

Within the general federal Operational Programme, the German non-profit welfare organisations use a special ESF sub-programme, called “Tail Wind - for staff in social services”, based on the partnership article 5.3 - ‘Good governance and partnership’ of the current ESF regulation.

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the non-statutory Welfare Association implement the sub-programme “Tail Wind” for personnel development in social economy organisations (‘partnership approach’). Beneficiaries are employees of the approved welfare and other non-profit organisations.

For the realisation of the programme, a support office was established, financed by Technical Assistance, and a steering group, responsible for the partnership approach of the programme. Programme funding: €60 million for the whole funding period (2007-2013).

The added value

- Tail Wind is one of the 4 partnership programmes carried out in the current funding period in Germany; the partnership programmes are strongly negotiated between an alliance of NGOs and social partners and the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs.
- A double staged process: one for the content and one for the approval.
- The equal representation of the steering group.
- The monitoring of the projects and the internal and external thematic networks.
- Impact for the whole sector, supported by the support office beyond the contract period.

The main obstacles encountered

- Different views regarding the use of the allowance rules with the approval administration.
- Different views of the assessments for the submitted applications.
- Problems of managing and administration of ESF-funded projects.

Current developments

Independent of the discussion on the Regulations for the new Structural Funds period between European Parliament and Council, the German Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (responsible for the ESF) follows the partnership approach and invites all involved partners of the current period to planning workshops for new partnership programmes. The Non Statutory Welfare Association takes part in these and suggests 2 proposals:

- To strengthen the social integration of families and the employability of persons who are furthest from the labour market by integrated Active Inclusion (in cooperation with the national poverty conference to reduce poverty);
- To address demographic change and strengthen adaptability and employability of staff and new interested persons in / for social services (to maintain / increase the employment rate).

III. Bulgaria, National Network for Children (NNC) as a General Representative for Human Rights Organizations in Bulgaria in the thematic group for the design of the new OP “Human Resources Development” (OPHRD)

Name and network: Dilyana Giteva, National Network for Children (NNC), Bulgaria

Contact details: office@nmd.bg / dilyana_giteva@yahoo.com / <http://nmd.bg/en/>

55 Tzar Simeon Str., 1000, Sofia, Bulgaria

Brief Description

In June 2012 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) announced a call for NGOs meeting certain requirements to participate in the design of the Operational Programme “Human Resources Development 2014-2020” (OPHRD). NNC applied to represent the group of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms. Following a formal selection procedure set up by the MLSP, NNC became General Representative for Human Rights Organizations in Bulgaria in the thematic group for the design of the new OPHRD. The first organisational meeting of the thematic group was on August 10, 2012. Right after the first meeting of the thematic group, NNC undertook the task to consolidate resources and support to its 106 members, and to start unifying the efforts of the other NGO members of the thematic group, in order to achieve a clear common position of the civil representatives on main issues, such as respect of fundamental rights and non-discrimination, rights and integration of marginalized groups such as Roma, children’s rights, fulfillment of the obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, etc.

The added value

NGOs were selected (through a transparent procedure) to participate, for the very first time, in the elaboration process of the OPHRD in Bulgaria. Taking into account that the negotiation process has only started, NNC has already submitted proposals to the concept of the new OPHRD 2014-2020 as well as suggestions for specific aims, target groups, activities to be supported and beneficiaries. The proposals were prepared with the participation of NNC members and respectively supported by them.

The main obstacles encountered

Voting NGOs are only about 10 out of 74 members of the thematic group. Another difficulty is the too-short notice allowed by the Ministry to respond to documents, taking into account the complexity of the issue and the need to consolidate the position with the members of the network and other NGOs, members of the working group. Also, a meaningful contribution entails having a comprehensive knowledge of the EU legislation and policies, concerning Structural Funds, and skills in the field of project elaboration and programming, which requires a lot of learning and training.

SECTION 5

EAPN KEY MESSAGES

- ✓ **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.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

(In colour, the novelties introduced in the next programming period)

Capacity building	Mechanism which aims at reinforcing the general organizational skills of beneficiaries (including NGOs) through a wide range of aspects (resources, networking, planning...). In the ESF draft Regulation, this would be limited only to less developed regions.
CIP	Community Initiative Programme, a Europe-wide funding programme found in earlier Structural Funds (like EQUAL, focused on supporting innovative, transnational projects aimed at tackling discrimination and disadvantage in the labour market).
Cohesion Fund	A fund for transport and environmental projects (including infrastructure) in poorer Member States.
Common Strategic Framework (CSF)	Strategic document helping Member States in setting their investments priorities for all Structural Funds, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. This document will help Member States preparing their partnership contracts with key actions for each thematic objective and Fund, ensuring a better combining of various Funds.
Community-led development approach	A specific tool for use at the local level, led by local action groups (made up of representatives of local public and private socio-economic partners including NGOs, local authorities, neighbourhood associations, groups of citizens...), which encourages them to develop integrated bottom-up approaches, focusing on building community capacity and stimulating innovation (including social innovation), while promoting community ownership by increasing participation within local development.
CSGs	Community Strategic Guidelines, principles issued for Structural Funds.
Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs)	On the basis of the macro-economic, employment, social policy measures outlined in the NRPs aiming at achieving all the headline targets of Europe 2020, the European Commission addresses recommendations that are tailored to the particular issues facing by each Member States about the most urgent measures to be adopted.
Earmarking	Obligatory allocation of a minimum proportion of Structural Funds in each country to support the delivery on the Europe 2020 Strategy and its 5 headline targets (including the poverty reduction one).
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
European Code of Conduct on partnership	EU document that should guide Member States when organizing the participation of all the relevant partners in the different stages of the implementation of the Structural Funds, by laying down

minimum requirements for National Authorities to ensure a high quality involvement of partners, including NGOs.

EPAP	The European Platform Against Poverty is the new policy framework established by the Commission as part of Europe 2020 (one of the 7 Flagship Initiatives), to support the delivery on the poverty reduction target, based on 5 areas of action: mainstreaming across all policy areas, use of EU funds, evidence-based social innovation, working in partnership and harnessing social economy, and better policy coordination between Member States.
Ex-ante conditionalities	Conditions that must be in place before Funds are disbursed (linked to thematic objectives, regulation...).
Ex-Post conditionalities	Conditions that will make the release of additional Funds contingent on performance.
Horizontal principle	Particular value or discipline applied across all the Structural Funds (e.g. gender, environment, social inclusion).
Europe 2020 Strategy	The strategy agreed by the European Council in 2010 to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, with 5 headline targets: innovation/R&D, climate change/energy, poverty reduction (lifting at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion), employment (raise the employment rate up to 75%) and education (reduce the early-school-drop-out rate below 10% and foster tertiary education). The three latter are commonly referred to as the “social targets” of Europe 2020.
Global Grants	A mechanism through which the Member State or the Managing Authority may entrust the management and implementation of a part of an Operational Programme to one or more intermediate bodies (including NGOs), and may provide small grants to NGOs with 100% financing.
Macro-economic conditionalities	Conditions that are prior to the disbursement of Funds. For Member States facing excessive budget deficit and, thus, not complying with the Growth and Stability Pact rules, Structural Funds could be suspended by the European Commission.
Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)	It is an inter-institutional agreement (European Commission, European Parliament and Council), which sets out the spending priorities of the EU budget for a 7-year period. It gives the maximum amounts (ceilings) for each broad category of expenditures (headings). The current negotiations about the next programming period 2014-2020 are currently underway.
n+2	The principle whereby Structural Funds must be spent within two years of the period for which they are allocated
NRPs	National Reform Programmes are prepared by Member States in April of each year to deliver on the objectives of Europe 2020, based on Integrated Guidelines and the priorities of the yearly Annual Growth Survey, and Spring Council Conclusions.

NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework – Reference document for the programming of Structural Funds at national level.
NSRs	National Social Reports are the successors of the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion and the National Strategic Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, based on the agreed Common Objectives of the Social Open Method of Coordination. The NSRs are aimed at underpinning the social dimension of the National Reform Programmes.
OP	Operational Programme
Partnership	The concept that Structural Funds should be planned and managed by a combination of government, different levels of authorities, social partners, NGOs and civil society.
Partnership Contracts	Also referred to as Partnership Agreements, they are global agreements between a Member State and the European Commission on the use of Structural Funds. This is a new strategic document, drafted by Member States in cooperation with partners, detailing the indicative amount of SF money by thematic objective at national level, for each of the SF, to deliver on each of the Europe 2020 headline targets.
Performance Reserve	A total of 5% of the national allocation of each Fund will be set aside and allocated at mid-term review to the Member States for the programmes that will have fully succeeded in meeting the Europe 2020 targets.
Priority axis	An operational programme shall consist of several priority axes. A priority axis shall concern one Fund for a category or region, shall correspond to a thematic objective, and comprise one or more investment priorities of that thematic objective, in accordance with the Fund's specific rules.
Technical Assistance	Mechanism which aims at supporting the smooth running and management of Structural Funds operation, for instance by covering studies concerning the operation of the Funds, the exchange of information and experience, reaching out to final beneficiaries, as well as support to organizations in preparing funding applications and implementation if given to NGOs.
Thematic objectives	Each Structural Fund shall support the thematic objectives so as to contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Thematic objectives shall be translated into investment priorities for each Structural Fund. For 2014-2020, the European Commission proposed 11 thematic objectives, out of which 4 defined the scope for the ESF, and all 11 for the ERDF.
Transition regions	A new category of EU Regions, whose GDP is between 75% and 90% of the EU27 average. The 2 others are the developed regions (above 90%) and the less developed ones (below 75%).

ANNEX: TEMPLATE FICHE

HOW TO TRANSLATE THE POVERTY REDUCTION TARGET INTO OPs

Here are some ideas for proposals aiming at helping National Networks to prepare their own contribution to the design of OPs (both ESF and ERDF).

1. SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POVERTY REDUCTION: BOTH A CORE AND CROSS-CUTTING THEMATIC OBJECTIVE

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POVERTY REDUCTION AS A CORE THEMATIC OBJECTIVE

In both the ESF and ERDF, there is a thematic objective on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty. The Commission's proposal to have 20% of the ESF earmarked for this priority gives a clear basis for asking for a prominent component on social inclusion and poverty reduction. In the case of the ERDF, the thematic concentration mechanism is focused on growth-enhancing priorities, so the component on social inclusion will be tougher to defend.

⇒ **FOR THE ESF:**

The full delivery on the poverty reduction target requires an integrated range of measures, such as:

- Integrated Active Inclusion approaches, based on the 3 pillars of Active Inclusion for working age people, which support holistic, personalised pathways to inclusion, quality work and social participation (with social, community integration and re-integration measures), contributing to ensure:

- Adequate minimum income, including also adequate social and unemployment benefits

Example: training people in receipt of the guaranteed minimum income including training courses, on-job-training, competence assessment at the start and at the end, sensitization of employers and access to certification, ensuring coverage of expenses and income support advice, etc...

- Access to quality services: social services, healthcare, childcare

Example: integrated projects, providing wrap-around services and one-stop shops, providing advice on income and debt, housing, health support, second chance education, community programmes based on street work with social counselling, socio-therapeutic activities, improvement of early education by upgrading teacher's competences, investing in / modernising affordable quality childcare structures, economic support for families in need, etc..

- Inclusive labour markets, aiming at providing integrated pathways to employment for long-term unemployed

Example: individual support, counselling, guidance, language courses, access to general and vocational training.

This also includes a territorial dimension, an example being the Local Employment Pacts, closely involving NGOs), and participative and bottom up approaches, such as

Open Space models, where final recipients can share and co-build their pathway to labour market integration.

- The following investment priorities should also be reflected: the integration of marginalized communities, combating discrimination (*i.e. [the Spanish OP against discrimination](#), co-managed by 5 big social NGOs*), enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high quality services; promoting social economy and social enterprises; community-led local development strategies.

Example: health care, community-based services and social services of general interest with projects for helping NGOs to improve the quality of their services, programme materials for illiterate adults, linking frontline services in a range of sectors to employment support including housing and mental health services; on promoting social economy and social enterprises, the Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs); on community-led local development strategies, to improve the empowerment, skills, capacity-building and capacity to engage in projects in local communities through participative and bottom-up processes).

⇒ **FOR THE ERDF:**

- Promote investments in health and social infrastructures, paying special attention to people facing poverty and social exclusion.
- In the framework of integrated plans, promote investment for physical and economic regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities, aiming at ensuring access to affordable and quality housing for marginalised communities (eg, the Roma) and address issues of homelessness (*for example: emergency shelters, relay houses, structures for people experiencing severe social exclusion, integration villages for Roma people, etc*).

For more detailed information about what kind of indicative actions your Managing Authority can lay down in the ESF and ERDF Ops, see [part II of the Commission Staff Working Document - Elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014-2020](#), p. 30-34).

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POVERTY REDUCTION AS A CROSS-CUTTING THEMATIC OBJECTIVE

Nevertheless, **the poverty reduction target**, as part of the inclusive growth pillar of Europe 2020, **should be seen as a cross-cutting priority**, to be taken into account in the other thematic objectives.

⇒ **For the ESF:**

- In promoting employment and supporting labour mobility, more focus should be given to a targeted support for long-term unemployed and groups furthest from the labour market.
- In the thematic priority investing in education, skills and life-long learning, the promotion of equal access to good quality early childhood education and care should be ensured, with particular attention given to the inclusion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

⇒ **For the ERDF:**

- Enhancing access to and use of quality of ICT, promoting the accessibility of ICT products and services for disadvantaged groups.
- Supporting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in public infrastructures and in the social housing sector, with targeted support for poor households, ensuring efficiency measures contribute to reducing energy poverty.

- Investing in quality, affordable childcare, education, skills and lifelong learning, by developing education and training infrastructures.

2. MAKE SURE THAT ALL DISADVANTAGED GROUPS ARE TARGETED

In all the recent EAPN publications⁴, EAPN members clearly stated that there was a cherry-picking method with regard to the target groups reached by the Operational Programmes. This state of play is partly due to a **creaming phenomenon**, which tends to focus efforts on those who are the easiest-to-reach (ie, the closest to the labour market). This tendency has been exacerbated by the economic crisis and the priority given to job maintenance.

That is why **Operational Programmes should better target (and in a more comprehensive way) the most disadvantaged groups**, such as the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities (including mental health), migrants (including refugees, through holistic support with psychological help, social counselling, language and social skills, social activities), ethnic minorities, marginalised communities (including Roma - for instance, through a secondary school for Roma parents), women (through programmes targeting the most deprived young women in a given area, supported to engage in education with free childcare and transport), lone parents (through integrated support services including on-job-training, individual advisor, one-to-one mentoring, allowances for cultural activities, clothing, learning materials, etc), homeless people, and other groups facing or at risk of facing poverty and social exclusion.

3. HOW TO ACT LOCALLY TO DEVELOP BOTTOM-UP AND PARTICIPATIVE ANTI-POVERTY PROJECTS?

⇒ POVERTY MAPPING

Encourage your Managing Authority to **develop and make use of poverty maps** when designing and implementing integrated strategies, to support the most disadvantaged areas.

⇒ COMMUNITY-LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

- Ask for the **involvement of local social NGOs and their beneficiaries in the design of local development strategies** (so as to highlight the socio-economic difficulties of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, to put forward appropriate outreach strategies and socially integrated solutions), and ensure they are **part of the local action groups** which will drive those strategies.
- Moreover, a **combined use of ESF and ERDF** is also possible to fund socially integrated projects, combining investments in infrastructures and the provision of services. In this case, and to ensure a better NGO involvement in the running of those projects, you can ask for the **ESF to be the lead Fund**.

⁴ **EAPN** *AN EU Worth Defending – Beyond Austerity to Social Investment and Inclusive Growth* – EAPN analysis of the 2012 National Reform Programmes (NRPs) and National Social Reports (NSRs), July 2012, p. 60. Also, **EAPN**, *Active Inclusion: Making it Happen, Policy into Practice*, Sept 2010, p. 55; **EAPN**, *Deliver Inclusive Growth – Put the heart back in Europe*, EAPN Analysis of the 2011 National Reform Programmes, Europe 2020, October 2011, p. 62.

4. PROMOTE SOCIAL EX-ANTE CONDITIONALITIES

Ask your Managing Authorities to **develop social ex-ante conditionalities**, to make sure that Structural Funds programmes will fully deliver on the poverty reduction target, through:

- A **strong and integrated anti-poverty ex-ante conditionality**, requiring the setting up of a national strategy for poverty reduction, laying down concrete proposals designed to work towards the achievement of the poverty reduction target (as defined in the NRPs and NSRs), which includes comprehensive and integrated measures such as:
 - Integrated Active Inclusion approaches;
 - Ensuring access to rights, resources and services for all groups, and the involvement of social NGOs and other relevant stakeholders at all stages of the national anti-poverty strategies (design, implementation and evaluation);
 - Preventing and combating segregation in all fields;
 - A Roma inclusion strategy;
 - Support given to small NGOs in accessing Funds.

These strategies should form the basis of the National Social Reports and the National Reform Programmes, and be part of the reporting process in Europe 2020.

- **Anti-discrimination, Gender Equality, Disability** ex-ante conditionalities.

5. PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION INDICATORS

The new role given to Structural Funds in the achievement of the poverty reduction target crucially implies the **setting up of an effective social evaluation system**, to assess the extent to which Structural Funds will have delivered on this target, through both hard and soft social indicators. The **social inclusion indicators should capture the approach in terms of “progression towards employment and social inclusion”** of those who are the furthest from the labour market, appraising much more than purely getting people back to work. Social inclusion indicators should go beyond easily and immediately quantifiable measurements, by favouring a more qualitative approach, based on recipients’ assessment, and longer-term result indicators.

⇒ **For the ESF:**

- Percentage of participants - service users from disadvantaged groups in education, training, gaining qualification, or in employment upon leaving.
- Percentage of participants - service users from disadvantaged groups demonstrating progress along the pathway to inclusion and social participation, eg volunteering, participation in community activities etc.
- Participant assessments on the value of the intervention (in terms of increasing their emotional well-being, developing their skills, etc), rating of consultation process around the intervention.
- Common longer-term result indicators on participants: participants in employment 6 months after leaving; participants in self-employment 6 months after leaving; participants with an improved labour market situation 6 months after leaving (sustainable nature of employment – full or part time, wages compared to minimum or national level, length and security of contracts).

⇒ **For the ERDF:**

- On energy efficiency: reduced number of people in energy poverty, following housing and energy efficiency intervention.
- On social infrastructures: number of people facing poverty and social exclusion benefitting from improved housing conditions or accessing affordable housing.

For more information, please have a look at [Developing social inclusion indicators for the structural funds - EAPN Guide for social inclusion NGOs and other monitoring committee members](#) (EN/FR).

6. INVEST IN REALLY PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY

Given their sound knowledge of the reality on the ground, the needs of different target groups, how to successfully run socially integrated projects funded by Structural Funds, **social NGOs should be clearly seen as real partners at all stages of the Structural Fund's process Operational Programmes** (from design to evaluation).

- **Urge your Managing Authority to make use of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership** to really give the right framework for a successful NGO involvement (for more details, see 1.1.3. 1) p. 10)
- **In project delivery, make sure that small NGOs can access Structural Funds**, by making available tailor-made Global Grants schemes, providing 100% up-front funding, as well as Technical Assistance and capacity building for NGOs, and by removing the financial obstacles encountered (with a greater use of pre-financing schemes).

Example: set up a national and regional Technical Assistance network, which is NGO-driven, aiming at delivering capacity building at regional level, and at supporting micro-projects, requiring no co-financing; NGO-driven support structure, to help small NGOs in developing ideas, provide assistance in developing applications, advise on matching funding, training, workshops.

7. MAKE TRANSNATIONALITY MORE SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE

Stronger provisions should be made, to ensure that small NGOs can access transnational projects funded by the ESF.

How?

- **Involve NGOs in selecting the themes for transnational co-operation** to go beyond purely labour market re-integration to inclusion, through integrated anti-poverty strategies (for example: a transnational programme on Active Inclusion, innovative and experimental projects on the fight against discrimination, life-long learning etc...).
- **Support grass-root initiatives targeting people experiencing poverty and social exclusion**, their needs and barriers to inclusion, and develop policy responses for ensuring successful pathways to inclusion and quality jobs, including through innovative projects, developing integrated Active Inclusion approaches.
- **Support the participation of social NGOs in project delivery**, by launching open and regular calls for proposals, and making them accessible to small and community-based projects.

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EAPN is supported by the Directorate – General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission. Its Funding is provided for under the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity PROGRESS (2007 – 2013).

For more information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=en>

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