

EAPN National Networks' concerns on structural funds An overview

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Ahead of the October 2008 capacity-building seminar, EAPN members were asked to prepare a short presentation of their current priorities on structural funds, in terms of:

- *Priorities for 2008-2009*
- *Current concerns*
- *How EAPN can help them*

The present document is a compilation of all answers received, and should give you a brief overview of the situation in different countries.

It has to be seen as a complement to the [September 2007 document](#) which provides more information on the presentation of national networks and how they organize their work on structural funds.

National Networks' current concerns on structural funds
COUNTRY: FRANCE

1. What are your network's main priorities for the years 2008-2009 on structural funds?

Objectif général : face à la réduction des financements, que les acteurs associatifs aient accès plus facilement aux financements.

- Bien préparer les associations au montage des projets FSE (outils, organisation de formations, hotline, etc.) ;
- Du fait d'une déconcentration du FSE en Région à 85%, assurer une remontée d'information depuis les Comités de Suivi Régionaux vers le national, en coordination avec les différents réseaux associatifs. Favoriser la Communication sur le territoire entre les réseaux, aussi bien au niveau national, régional que local ;
- Favoriser le développement de projets en inter-réseaux au niveau local pour augmenter les chances de succès, notamment pour les petites structures : outils de gestion communs, échange de pratiques, renforcement de la capacité de négociation auprès des autorités de gestion, etc.

2. What are the main problems you are facing/concerns you have with regard to structural funds at the moment?

- Pour la mesure « micro-projet » 4.2.3 (anciennement 10b), qui est une des mesures les plus utilisées parmi le monde associatif, on constate un retard considérable dans la programmation. Nous sommes à mi-2008 et les organismes intermédiaires ne sont toujours pas identifiés et le programme ne devrait pas se lancer avant début 2009.
- Difficultés d'accès au FSE. À elle seule, la lourdeur des dossiers (demande, acompte, bilan) et des outils de gestion qu'ils nécessitent rend l'accès très difficile aux petites entités qui n'ont pas les moyens d'affecter un professionnel à cette tâche. Mais les difficultés les plus insurmontables pour ces structures tiennent au risque financier que leur fait courir le recours au FSE. Le paiement intervient en effet une fois le projet réalisé et après contrôle, aucune avance n'étant versée pour la mise en œuvre. On peut se demander si les autorités de gestion nationales et les partenaires co-financeurs ont vraiment fait le nécessaire pour rendre le cadre défini par l'UE suffisamment fluide.
- À cela viennent s'ajouter des délais très importants dans le déblocage des fonds après contrôle, ce qui amène à des paiements de subvention plus de 2 ans après le démarrage du projet. En mai 2008, certaines structures n'ont toujours pas perçu le solde du FSE 2005. Tout cela rend de fait l'accès au FSE pratiquement impossible pour une structure qui n'a pas une trésorerie importante. Ce barrage ne fait que se confirmer dans la programmation en cours, où tout est fait pour décourager les petites structures associatives de se positionner. Certaines structures ont ainsi renoncé aux financements FSE du fait de ces retards de paiements et des difficultés de trésorerie que cela engendre. Les frais bancaires n'étant pas éligibles et

	<p>restent à la charge des structures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aussi contraignantes soit-elles, les règles de gestion du fond édictées par l'Union Européenne ne peuvent être rendues entièrement responsables de la lourdeur des procédures auxquelles se heurtent les demandeurs en France. L'ensemble des acteurs dénoncent une mise en œuvre opaque et un manque flagrant de moyens investis par la France pour s'appropriier et animer la gestion du FSE. Les structures demandeuses décrivent des services en charge de la gestion du fonds très peu formés aux objectifs de la programmation et cantonnés à une approche financière des enjeux. Ces services étudient les demandes sur le papier et n'approchent qu'exceptionnellement le terrain, ce qui limite la compréhension des contraintes de l'environnement dans lequel les structures demandeuses évoluent, notamment dans le secteur de l'insertion de personnes en difficultés. Pour qu'un dialogue puisse se nouer autour des objectifs qualitatifs visés par les projets, il faudrait que les autorités de gestion considèrent les structures demandeuses comme de véritables partenaires. - On constate également un manque d'articulation entre les différents services de l'Etat français et des changements permanents dans les règlements et les procédures. Ainsi, de 2003 à 2006, en région Midi-Pyrénées, les formulaires de demande et de bilan ont changé chaque année, de même que le taux d'intervention et les modalités de calcul du solde. - La baisse des crédits FSE pour les personnes les plus éloignées de l'emploi : l'Etat français s'est engagé à ne pas diminuer les financements. Cela est vrai pour ce qui concerne la prise en charge des salaires des Structures d'Insertion par l'Activité Economique qui est assurée par des financements Etat. Cependant, la diminution des crédits FSE pour les PLIE (Plan Local pour l'Insertion et l'Emploi) qui atteint en moyenne 35% de baisse touche fortement les SIAE qui voient les financements de fonctionnement diminuer fortement, parfois jusqu'à 50%.
<p>3. How do you think the EAPN working group can help to tackle these problems?</p>	<p>1) help you as member of the working group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Savoir comment est géré le FSE dans les autres Etats membres - Découvrir des pratiques ailleurs en Europe issues du monde associatif qui permettent de pallier aux carences de gestion des Etats et qui favorise l'accès des structures au fond FSE. <p>2) help your National Network?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - En mettant en place des actions de lobbying auprès de la Commission, en vue d'améliorer les mécanismes nationaux de gestion des fonds et notamment sur les délais de paiement vers les porteurs de projet ;

National Networks' current concerns on structural funds COUNTRY: the Czech Republic	
1. What are your network's main priorities for the years 2008-2009 on structural funds?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creating web pages with subsection "EU structural funds" – news about structural funds in the Czech Republic, discussion, ▪ Forming a working group focused on structural funds within EAPN Czech Republic (depending on interest of the national network members) ▪ Responding to the relevant problems in the field of EU structural funds (e.g. letter to the cabinet minister of labor and social affairs – calling attention to discontent of an not-for profit NGO about call for proposal delay with appeal for help to speed up the process)
2. What are the main problems you are facing/concerns you have with regard to structural funds at the moment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delay of calls for proposals within operational programs dealing with social inclusion (Operational Program Human Resources and Employment, Integrated Operational Program, Operational Program Education for competitiveness) with the perspective of call for proposals first in autumn 2008 (i.e. the assumed start of project realization in the first third of 2009) ▪ Absence of consecutiveness in the projects' realization between the finishing period of the EU structural funds drawdown 2004-2006 and the current period for 2007-2013 causes subsistence problems of started programs and services within social inclusion of many not-for profit NGOs. ▪ The financial system of some social services which is being prepared (social prevention services – e.g. shelters for homeless people) from the European structural funds, the recipient of which will be the regional authority, that will become the promoter of tenders for service provision on social prevention within particular regions, whereas the public tender winner can become only one social service provider in the particular region, who can but must not make partnerships with other service providers of the same kind of service. This system can bring along dissolution of some not-for profit NGOs as well as problems with subsequent funding of service provision in the following period, i.e. after the European structural funds support will finish. ▪ Monitoring committees – it is perceived as being very positive that in the most of the monitoring committees of the operational programs there are representatives of not-for profit NGOs, however in some of them having just a observation role without right to vote. The number of the not-for profit NGO representatives is very poor (mostly one representative in the monitoring committee)

<p>3. How do you think the EAPN working group can help to tackle these problems?</p>	<p>1) help you as member of the working group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An overview of what kind of operational programs and sphere of support for the social inclusion field there are in particular countries and what is the approach of the not-for profit NGOs towards them (including the calls for proposal system) <p>2) help your National Network?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provision of information, how many representatives of the not-for profit NGOs there are in the monitoring committees and what are their rights in the particular EU member countries
<p>4. Based on the answers to the questions above, what issues should the October seminar address?</p>	<p>Social inclusion through EU structural funds – what is the focus of EU structural funds, giving best practice</p> <p>Activities of monitoring committees of particular operational programs from the view of membership and interference options of not-for profit NGOs</p>

National Networks' current concerns on structural funds COUNTRY: Hungary	
1. What are your network's main priorities for the years 2008-2009 on structural funds?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensuring the access to the SF for more and more small NGOs – Support smaller projects with less hard indicators but real achievements – The appropriate tool to achieve our goals: the global grants system
2. What are the main problems you are facing/concerns you have with regard to structural funds at the moment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Delays in timing and payment – No coordinated, continuous project finance; achieved good results are disappearing; sustainability many times is a mystery – Distance with social inclusion NGO delegates in Monitoring Committees (lack of capacity to circulate all the needs towards the delegate and back) – Lack of "open contribution" the design of call for proposals
3. How do you think the EAPN working group can help to tackle these problems?	<p>1) help you as member of the working group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Talking about good solutions; presentation of case studies, e.g.: how to cooperate with your MC delegate; how to collect and summarize needs of your network's members and how to feedback <p>2) help your National Network?</p>
4. Based on the answers to the questions above, what issues should the October seminar address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Regarding capacity building, what type of resources (human, infrastructural and financial resources) are required in order to ensure that my Structural Funds Task Force can efficiently help my own network and its members: we could talk about a "minimum standard" of capacities.

National Networks' current concerns on structural funds COUNTRY: Ireland	
1. What are your network's main priorities for the years 2008-2009 on structural funds?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prepare a briefing for members and others on the design and opportunity for structural funds in Ireland • Follow up on opportunities for NGOs within the ESF • Develop plan for EAPN Ireland's engagement with the Structural Funds
2. What are the main problems you are facing/concerns you have with regard to structural funds at the moment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More limited opportunities for NGOs to engage with and access structural funds. The remaining limited opportunities for access to the funds are to be led by stage agencies and departments which have mainly different priorities. • EAPN Ireland resources to engage with them and they are not a priority for most social NGOs as they are much reduced from previous programmes.
3. How do you think the EAPN working group can help to tackle these problems?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and address common concerns and issues and trends. • Tackling them at EU level is an important start. • Where similar experiences exist, identifying where the opportunities exist and how to exploit these.
4. Based on the answers to the questions above, what issues should the October seminar address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying trends across member states • how to challenge negative trends and exploit or create opportunities.

National Networks' current concerns on structural funds COUNTRY: Lithuania	
1. What are your network's main priorities for the years 2008-2009 on structural funds?	To provide NGO – members of EAPN Lithuania with information and support on structural funds; In relation with this, network cooperating with Lithuanian NGDO (non-governmental developmental organizations) platform prepared and presented an application for EEA and Norway grants fund. Aim of the project is to establish permanent office where two organizations would work in cooperation with each other seeking their goals.
2. What are the main problems you are facing/concerns you have with regard to structural funds at the moment?	Up till now NGO not always were allowed to apply for support for structural funds. Information was difficult to get, rules for participation were very complicated. Monitoring committee softened the rules and allowed almost all NGO types in Lithuania to participate- even religious- what was not the case before. Despite that few more difficulties are still left. One of such is the official request in case of project application approval to present bank validation/ or guarantee list for the amount which is given. This requirement excludes smaller NGO and limits the number of possible participants.
3. How do you think the EAPN working group can help to tackle these problems?	1) help you as member of the working group? 2) help your National Network? Big help would be an exchange of information on good practice examples on how to support network organizations and influence government on making the rules more flexible.
4. Based on the answers to the questions above, what issues should the October seminar address?	Possibilities and ways to influence country governments decisions regarding structural funds; Support of the member organizations of the network.

National Networks' current concerns on structural funds COUNTRY: Portugal	
1. What are your network's main priorities for the years 2008-2009 on structural funds?	<p>Implement projects (in areas such as training and quality of services of NGO's). We have submitted 8 projects to an operational programme called human capital</p> <p>Lobby (participate in monitoring committees)</p> <p>Dissemination of information</p>
2. What are the main problems you are facing/concerns you have with regard to structural funds at the moment?	<p>In Portugal the social inclusion theme is not a priority in this period. The government is concerned with unemployment and lack of qualifications and considers that by investing in education, training can tackle unemployment and social exclusion.</p> <p>In the national operational programmes there are only a few axes that are directly linked with social inclusion.</p> <p>Besides that only the big NGO's can assess to the funds, as the bureaucracy and the information is too complex and NGO's must have some cash flow.</p>
3. How do you think the EAPN working group can help to tackle these problems?	<p>1) help you as member of the working group? Information/training/exchange of experiences/practices</p> <p>2) help your National Network? Lobby Partnership</p>
4. Based on the answers to the questions above, what issues should the October seminar address?	<p>Lobby</p> <p>Transnationality</p> <p>Partnership</p>

National Networks' current concerns on structural funds COUNTRY: SPAIN	
1. What are your network's main priorities for the years 2008-2009 on structural funds?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To consolidate and strengthen our participation in follow-up committees where we are present - To encourage the participation of NGOs in Regional Operational Programmes - To raise awareness of public administrations running Operational Programmes and ask them to promote the multi-year calls managed by NGOs
2. What are the main problems you are facing/concerns you have with regard to structural funds at the moment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lack of acceptance of NGOs as direct operators in Regional Operational Programmes. - One should make use of structural funds for social inclusion and not just for employment.
3. How do you think the EAPN working group can help to tackle these problems?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By informing and exchanging good practices experiences - By lobbying on Third Sector
4. Based on the answers to the questions above, what issues should the October seminar address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How Structural Funds and social inclusion are linked together. - NGOs as partners in Operational Programmes management - EAPN lobbying for stronger participation.

National Networks' Current Concerns on Structural Funds Country: UK	
1. What are your network's main priorities for the years 2008-2009 on structural funds?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Third sector organizations to be directly represented by accountable regional networks of practitioners on Programme Monitoring Committees ✓ Bidding rounds to be accessible and transparent to third sector providers ✓ Funding regimes to allow for up-front payments and avoid funding gaps ✓ Projects, including transnational, to meet cross-cutting themes (diversity, sustainability and health) in terms of social inclusion by promoting soft "distance-travelled" indicators and by preparing for the 2010 European Year to Combat Poverty ✓ Technical Assistance and capacity building funds targeted on third sector providers to be available to voluntary and community networks at a supportive intervention rate.
2. What are the main problems you are facing/concerns you have with regard to structural funds at the moment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increasing size of projects at expense of third sector providers by moving focus up-market away from small, targeted street-level interventions on exclusion and poverty ✓ Lack of transparency and of local accountability with regard to sub-contracting ✓ Inadequate support for partnership building and maintenance ✓ Dismissive attitude of government at all levels towards linking Technical Assistance and capacity building ✓ Inadequate recognition of EU agenda in name of national mainstreaming and streamlining
3. How do you think the EAPN working group can help to tackle these problems?	<p>1) as member of the working group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Share experience of good and bad practice ✓ Improve understanding of EU policy/lobbying/advocacy & running projects on ground ✓ Integrate Structural Funds work into wider activity of EAPN ✓ Group to work collectively on raising funds for EAPN project under Structural Funds <p>2) National Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strengthen links with other networks with a view to extending knowledge/funding base ✓ Develop EU profile within Member States by contributing to national publications and events ✓ Continued lobbying of European Commission to target part of pan-EU Technical Assistance on third sector and to release funding for work with National Networks
4. Based on the answers to the questions above, what issues should the October seminar address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Transnational initiatives, under the mainstream European Structural Funds, to fund Active Inclusion Networks with EAPN acting as partnership broker ✓ Positioning the Structural Funds re 2010 European Year Against Poverty ✓ Scope of Convergence Area capacity-building measures under Structural Funds ✓ Showcasing third-sector projects tackling social exclusion under the Structural Funds ✓ Information on the development and reach of European philanthropy to match-fund regional/national third-sector provider networks under the Structural Funds.