

Notes from the participation capacity building seminar 7-8 May 2010

This document includes shorthand notes from the seminar. It is informal and it is for reference by the participants in the seminar only. The report from the seminar NDev 025-10 remains the main reference document for anyone interested in this meeting.

Notes from the first day: Empowerment and Democracy

All the morning interventions are in separate documents on the page.

Common report to the plenary from the four workshops:

1. Common language which is understandable
2. trust and respect
3. to have concrete tasks, targets and to include accountability
4. be ambitious!
5. use the laws
6. enhance direct representation
7. reaching to social professionals
8. reach the political level
9. be careful of what you do after 2010-05-07 improve statistics/indicators

Group 1: Keywords in workshops

Symmetry in the relationship

Reciprocal engagement (all partners should get engaged)

Co-training (common training)

Frequency of contact

Distance and withdrawal (if persons suffer or are in a crisis, it's not the good moment to talk abt participation)

Go for political proposals

Use legislation

Be audacious and ambitious

Be authentic

Create or work based on proximity

Favour direct representation of persons

Establish a culture of partnership

Mediate (the professional should in time not be an interface but support direct representation)

Pass from individual to collective (not talking only abt oneself but also about the difficulties of a whole group)

Group 2: Focus on Methods

Active involvement (brings empowerment, self-esteem and confidence)

Community (all age groups be involved)

Weakness with Education (especially in schools)

Bad use or misuse of local authority resources but also opportunity for NGOs to get engaged

Social enterprise (good provides income; but misused by big companies)

Groups and associations for policy work

Group 3: Common language

Respect

Listen to each other

Solidarity

Trust

Accountability

Empathy

Information

Acknowledgement

Support

Personal relationships (trainings can give not only information and self-confidence but build new relations between people and motivating to have contact)

Group 4: Methods

Participatory

Collective decisions for agendas and meetings

Outreach work (community engagement)

Bringing together different groups (sharing experiences of poverty)

Support to small groups to strengthen them

Use of case studies that have impact

Organizing meetings that bring people experiencing poverty and policy makers

Strengths:

Participation needs resources (ex: structural funds) and information (peer)

Collaboration with society as a whole

Make governments accountable

Further work on adequate minimum income

Improve statistics and indicators (quality) so that they show real situation

Fight stereotyping (poverty not only a lack of money)

Improve awareness of poverty and its many facets

Connect to trade unions

What do we take back to the National Network?

Germany:

- using common languages because the politicians take our language and turn it around
- what will happen after 2010 in Germany and in the EAPN network because many things happened this year and many people are so busy with activities and they don't have anytime to think what to take next year
- Laeken Indicators – only statistics is not enough, they do not reflect the real situation of the people living in poverty, so it's important to develop other indicators

Italy:

As EXCO member – start to have a clearer picture of what our strategic plan should be about

1. People in poverty that are not socially excluded are the people best set for meeting people living in deep crisis because they went through this situation and they have the culture to overcome and think of how to overcome.
2. use culture to take people out of poverty (anything that does not focus only on money)
3. as a network, we bring about the idea of using our laws, Italy has one of the best laws in Europe but they are not enforced (petitions or anything to get the laws enforced)
4. help people in poverty break their own barriers and take the challenge to live their dreams and have projects

Ireland:

- accountability – promises made and no failure
- encourage direct representation
- think of participation after 2010-05-07

Scotland:

- common language about the moving jargon
- managing expectations of community activists – often expectation that things will change tomorrow – change takes time
- increased resources for participation to be meaningful (UK social sector will have cuts) need to find alternative ways to resource participation

Austria:

- understandable language and spreading info in understandable language
- reach out to more people, not only work with the current groups, especially important on minimum income

Greece:

- creating a method with concrete tasks, targets and build accountability
- clear image and regular contact
- will lead to mutual trust and respect

Spain:

- a law on participation in Spain
- building symmetric relations and raise awareness that such a relation be built

Czech Republic:

- enhancing direct representation
- find common language and speak more often

Portugal:

- important to learn from countries that have experience with participation
- we can all learn from each other

France:

- all the recommendations should be followed and refer to point 4 which reminds of the diversity of excluded groups and we often generalize and exclude people in precarious situation – we need to propose many methods so that it allows people to adapt.

- Improve statistics/indicators

Slovakia:

- gathering different groups because poverty has different faces
- be authentic – say the truth
- respect and trust
- ambitions and concrete tasks and targets

Belgium:

- partnerships with other organizations, trade unions, welfare organizations, research centres so that we cooperate more together
- also more cooperation between organizations of people experiencing poverty because some want to keep their own successes to themselves
- cooperate on the Decennia goals together with other partners and on local level with platforms of other organizations about stop poverty now.

Notes from the second day: Power Sharing: from manipulation and stigmatization to building relations of equality and trust

All the inputs can be found in separate documents on the participation page.

Feedback from workshops

Group1: Methods to challenge myths about poverty

- use real life stories that show poverty is complex
- overcome shame destroying self-confidence of people

Campaign – all levels and platforms of poverty (ex: energy poverty, give people the experience of moral power)

Give people in poverty an active role in determining their support needs

- give people support improve mental and physical strengths for better self-esteem

Recommendations:

- information is power: (be aware of international laws and national examples; focus on specific areas of poverty)
- budget for translation

Educate and know the political system that works in your country and how to access/influence the information (ex: local authorities; councillors; members of parliament; MEPs)

- nothing about us without us
- respond to government plans, strategy and follow-up on progress in accordance to our own values.
- Work together not in isolation.

Group 2: - good training for participation “agents” with practical and theoretical expertise

- transparency/information and cooperation as well as support between networks on participation (networks in similar and different situations) projects and exchange on outcomes of projects
- organise language training (English)
- training course to overcome the language “problem”.

Key words:

1. change people’s minds
2. work from bottom-up
3. concrete resources and places where people can come together
4. information and training at all levels
5. giving people ideas to make sense of their lives, find perspectives and develop desires.

Group 3: Manipulation of what people say

- Empowerment - Training to do policy involvement/lobby work and adapt it to the specific needs of people to understand better the context
- Motivation – important that people have the right to choose their level of participation, not push people – No pressure!
- Offering alternative ways of engaging (building confidence) – support and listen, at least get in contact
- Information and involvement (EAPN and national networks) – resources to enable people access to the information (language: listen and interpret what people are saying; change language of interpretation or use more creative ways to deal with it – visual representations). Not force people to make decision if they haven’t had a chance to do that before. Be realistic and transparent about what people can expect to be involved.

Stigmatization: acknowledge and respect difference (peer support to select agenda; open eapn and member organizations)

2010 – beginning of the participation process.

Group 4: Manipulation, discrimination, power sharing

First thing to do is to put the questions on the table

- in participative groups start with everyone’s own experience and has access to same level of information, everyone should have an access to rights, support taking the floor
- support to overcome the feeling of insecurity and shame and show belonging to a diverse group which brings us together
- find what brings people together and not what makes them distant
- start from one thing that people can do together (cooking workshop, creativity etc.) that recognizes everyone’s competences
- manipulation happens both ways
- make sure people don’t risk losing themselves
- participation is a stage in personal development to autonomy

Means:

- peer training: people don’t have the same rhythm, same tempo, same expectations – so need to evaluate the process
- increase networking

- people having passed through poverty to train future social workers
- people experiencing poverty should be part of decision-making

Is it easier to work based on written texts or based on spontaneity?

- written text helps to speak in front of unknown audiences (prepared together in advance)
- need both, structures a framework but also human commitment
- participation in EAPN supports curiosity

What do we take back to the National Network?

Scotland:

- use existing legal framework (for example – Scottish comrades act)
- provide more opportunities for people experiencing poverty to share their own individual stories but also to provide feedback so that we move together
- will take the message back and apply some of the learning to the national community activist group
- increasing what we do already on engaging policy makers at different levels – encourage people experiencing poverty to make presentations to parliamentary committees on social exclusion, education and housing.

At EU level – an opportunity for NNs to share information and good practice – establish direct network relations

On training: involve people in planning the training and adapt it so that participation comes from bottom up

Austria:

- language training – recommendation for EAPN to organize it on European level but can also do it in Austria (already did it before)
- training for member organizations of the Austrian network to share models and see how to build better participation structures.

France:

- peer training
- pay attention to the individual persons when focusing on building collective participation
- disseminate information
- what do we do in 2010

Ireland:

- nothing about us without us
- more often look at more creative ways and respect difference
- in EAPN Ireland participation is a key priority in 2010

Greece:

- give specific roles and tasks to increase confidence
- resources for language training
- alternative space for getting in touch with people – glad to hear that kind of creative examples

Sweden:

- inspired by everything

Italy:

- feeling more confident that going in the right direction
- pay more attention to use directly the language of people who experience poverty not teaching them how to use our own language
- need to work more to become a good model for other networks and use participation as a method in all our activities and in evaluation this should be the first question
- focus on training

Spain:

- taking everything and then will pass it on to the networks at different levels to choose

Luxembourg:

- looking for more members into EAPN Luxembourg so as to have more contact and access to persons experiencing poverty and to pass on the information
- looking forward to get deeper knowledge in a training so as to pass it on
- using theatre group approach
- bringing persons in poverty to meetings with decision-makers

Norway:

- will speak of the solidarity all over Europe and will take back example of working with homeless persons.

Belgium:

- already have the opportunity to involve many people in poverty in flanders and BE but need to look for easier ways for people experiencing poverty to bring their competencies make more various involvement for people who don't have the possibility to invest a lot in poverty.
- More visual information presentation with photos etc at NN and EAPN level

Poland:

- can we organize these meetings on weekends so that people experiencing poverty don't lose their jobs.
- Many things in common (our National Networks are very weak) and especially in Eastern Europe very hard to implement participation, a question how to motivate other NNs – thought to organize a meeting in a very nice hotel in Warsaw and to invite members of EAPN Poland and cross-border cooperation

Slovenia:

- EAPN Slovenia is supporting the work on participation in EAPN and will try to build this process internally

Hungary:

- need to make the network more transparent, improve the internal communication to make sure everybody and especially people experiencing poverty can follow closely
- taking the idea of agents for participation – organize in the future training for trainers
- need to improve tolerance within the network and the fight against stigmatization within our groups and which we need to discuss openly but sometimes don't do

Czech Republic:

- will write to other people in the network because the scope of the discussion in the network is not enough to do this
- inspiring the idea of training people experiencing poverty to be more engaged in this process and feel a lot of support from other Networks to put this idea in practice.

Portugal:

- bringing the idea that we are at the beginning and that no model is best
- idea of training for all the social actors, the next big challenge for EAPN Europe and NNs.