

7. Increasing participation of people experiencing poverty in EAPN working structures.

Tanya presented the work done so far by EAPN in terms of participation. She highlighted that the EXCO will be making proposals on how to improve participation at EU as well as at national level. The debate in the Social Inclusion Working Group will contribute to this discussion.

Feedback from working groups

Group 1:

The group brainstormed on how to do this/highlighting obstacles and possible solutions. The decision to include people in poverty directly will have a significant impact on the objectives/outcomes and methodology of the working group.

Methodology:

- use the same methodology as in the participation reflection meeting (2 persons coming from every NN)
- developing idea of shadows
- accept it's a long-term process (next 5 years) – linked to skill development particularly language.
- members of the working group should be able to do consecutive translation
- agenda should be reduced – slower rhythm
- adapt the methodology on how we work in the social inclusion working group
- NN delegates would need to prepare the agenda, inform the people experiencing poverty and engage them.
- Need to strengthen the buddy system for all new members.
- Develop key principles for participation which can be applied to different situations.

Implications:

- What do we do with the rest of the agenda? Does this get left to the secretariat?
- Could NNs have own social inclusion working groups to cover the agenda?
- Specific changes will be need to be made to respond to concrete obstacles people meet

Group 2:

The group had more of a wide-ranging discussion about how this might work and the questions it raised.

- What would be the function of this group in relation to the function of other groups? Participation would have to be mainstreamed into all groups at the same time.
- Participation is already happening in some NNs so EAPN should support that work and build on it, using their expertise.
- Support the process of integration of people experiencing poverty to engage in this group and involve some of the people themselves in the discussion over how.
- There will be important capacity building needs to be met (at national or EU level?) including a language course

Group 3:

- Shadowing or accompanying main members can be an important first step. Some NN are already using this methodology. This has important implications for the size/expense of the working group as well as the rhythm, methodology and content of the work.
- There needs to be a/person/s responsible for helping newcomers to the group to integrate

Group 4:

The group focussed on the challenges:

- Assumptions are made about who are people in poverty. In the group there are already people experiencing poverty or who have experienced poverty.
- It seems very ambitious to be attempting to increase participation systematically at EU level, before EAPN organizations have done so at national level, within their own organizations.
- It needs to be clear if we are talking only about poverty in terms of being economically deprived or people suffering from other types of social exclusion eg with multiple disabilities
- A major step forward would be if EAPN respected accessibility (disability and race, for example) in terms of venues/food/ etc.
- It would change the focus and objectives of the working group. It would not be possible to work with a very complicated EU agenda in the same way, which is often externally driven and might be difficult (who, on what basis and how)

Group 5:

Other issues raised:

- Representativeness – how would the people be chosen, who would they represent?
- What would be the content of the meeting? It would mean a significant change in the ability of the group to engage with a complex EU agenda.

ACTION

- Tanya will take the results of the discussion to the EXCO debate and follow up seminar on participation in June. Follow up will be fed back to group in November.

8. Participation in Policy-making Publication

The scoping note on the participation publication was introduced by Sian. The aim is to build on the previous participation booklet, highlighting good practices in participation in the policy-making process, particularly highlighting the Social Inclusion Strategy and the OMC, the value-added from participation for both groups and people, as well as impact on policy. The final section will try to set out a guide/checklist for both NGO's and decision-makers.(How to do). Sian and Tanya will be responsible for the publication. Timeline: (July – December)

Debate

- Participants generally welcomed the initiative.
- Developing a publication on how, is very important. This had been a specific point raised on the current publication, which raised interesting examples but didn't give guidance on how to move forward. This publication would be a welcome follow up focusing more specifically on participation in policy-making.
- The publication needed to acknowledge the involvement of people from the group specifically.
- It will be important to recognize different cultural contexts on civil dialogue – and how to in different countries.

ACTION

- The scoping note was agreed.
- A working group was established to support Sian and Tanya: Isabella (Hungary), Anna (Ireland), Sergio (Portugal) Graciela (Spain).