**EU INCLUSION STRATEGIES GROUP**

*Saturday, 4 October 2014*

***Small group minutes***

**Making the EU ISG work better for its members**

**Questions discussed by all groups**

1. **How can we improve member’s engagement with Europe 2020, will WP 2015 proposals help?**
2. **How can we focus more on policy themes as a way of bringing Europe 2020 alive? What themes?**

**Group 1**

**Participants**: Graciela/ES; Jens/DK, Jeanne/FR, Katharina/CZ, Kärt/EE, Sergio/PT, Slavka/SK, Robert/LU. **Rapporteur:** Jeanne, **Note-taker**: Barbara

**Question 1 and 2 were merged.**

**Sérgio/PT**: emphasized that it was important to be engaged with Europe 2020 because that was the place – and the only place – where social policy was happening.

**Katarina/CZ:** said that we needed a change of paradigm; that the money was actually there and that it was necessary to communicate that to the national networks. She added that it was also important to stay positive.

**Jeanne/FR:** responded by saying that it was one thing to be positive, but we also had to be realistic.

**Katarina/CZ**: Everybody is against everything and the energy does not come out.. We have a work programme and we cannot change it now. We are asked to engage more in the mid-term review although it is difficult to understand Europe. We should put energy into what we should and could change. I am suggesting that we should have a national participatory meeting and give feed-back.

**Sergio/PT:** The worse period for us was when there was no social agenda from 1994 to 1999. There was nothing. EAPN continued to exist, but there was no process to follow. The second lesson from history was that we were very critical of the Lisbon strategy and what do we have now? As you saw yesterday the revision of the strategy could kill social inclusion in the agenda.

**Katarina/CZ**: I think people do not know about 2020, even national members, and even if we were doing capacity building. We need to be careful about our capacities and the timing. If the agenda is not specific. I think if I would do an activity I would have to study the content and the relevance and to find out the content of the workshop. Then make the discussion very short and focus on the national relevance and underpin why we would be interested in engaging. As to the indicators, I am not sure they are interesting. I agree that the CSRs are more important and I think less is more.

**Kärt/EE:** I agree indicators are very tricky, for example the one on school drop-outs.

**Katarina/CZ:** The indicators used could lead to the assumption that the Czech Republic has already fulfilled the indicators.

**Kärt/EE**: We achieved the target, but it does not say how they have done it. There are tricks and so many people have left the country.

**Katarina/CZ**: Policy input relies on indicators. They are the bones and we have to put flesh around the bone.

**Slavka/SK**: We cannot see the social changes because there is too much bureaucracy around projects and strategies. The indicators are not the same as the outcome.

**Kärt/EE:** The biggest challenge is to change people’s thinking. Majority of people in Estonia think that if you work everything is solved. To have a job is the only good. Difficult to lobby for anything else. Even if they agree in other points, they think a job is the saviour.

**Katarina/CZ**: There is OECD data which NGOs cannot access and it is those kind of qualitative data that we need.

**Sérgio/PT:** How can we engage better in the 2020 strategy? We had two concrete proposals, but what is still missing. Governments submit NRP and there is no mention of social issues. First we need – and it is in our work programme – an awareness project which reaches out to all of Europe.

**Kärt/EE:** I received an answer from the European Parliament. Data is not available to NGOs as well.

**Katarina/CZ**: I would like to see less topics. There are too many topics that we are supposed to deal with. It demotivates.

**Sérgio/PT**: but you said you need to know the process better?

**Katarina/CZ**: I remember when I first came to Europe from Eastern Europe, I wanted to look smart and did not want to admit that I did not know or I did not understand.

**Robert/LU**: Can we be more precise that the work load is huge. For me the heaviest things are the agenda and the documents for the meeting that are more than 300 pages. Nobody will read them. This is something that EAPN has not understood.

**Katharina/CZ**: Even the publications now are very huge.

It could help if we have one page with kind of calendar of when the NRPs are going out, April transmitted to the European Commission. When we meet it should have a relevance to the calendar.

**Katharina/CZ:** Calendar this is not the crucial point. For me is the amount of the topics.

**Jeanne/FR**: when we comment on an NRP, could we concentrate more on three topics?

**Sérgio/PT**: We could focus on the target for example. Some of the documents are huge. If you ask the staff to make a short document, that is a whole extra work and it will be selective. The important points will be selected by that person.

**Kärt/EE**: We already have a very narrow focus, but it is important.. we need to know about clean energy and understand the economy deeper. Often we fail in debates because we do not have the right arguments. I think it is difficult to manage.

**Slavka/SK**: Fintan wrote that we are a branch of EAPN. It is a lot of materials to read and to comment. We need to find fundraising for this.

**Katharina/CZ**: Within the limits of my capacity I can engage in the Roma, CSRs and NRPs. The rest of the emails and documents I need to leave at the side.

**Sérgio/PT**: All of us are working on different areas. Representatives of NN, we should also make use of our specializations.

**Graciela/ES**: how can you put together 5 members of this group working on Roma? This group is following the semester. First with subgroups and taskforces. We follow national processes, how can we go specific?

**Jens/DE**: I have another problem in Germany we have the whole network including welfare organizations. I am in Brussels and I get asked: Jens what are you doing in Brussels? We are fighting here. I must become the interpreter for European policies. We are colleagues and fight together. We could not do all for the local scene when we are not fighting in Brussels. It is not only our network, but also the national attitude towards Europe. We need to develop sympathy for Europe.

**Jens/DE:** As a national network we have the same problems. We are doing our work and we decide what we want to do. It is not necessary to produce hundreds of pages. What is the workload; how much resources you have? ..The next step is that we have to write all papers in simple speech. First it was a lot work. But everybody was prepared on the Board and could read it. We here produce pages nobody wants to read. I think I can understand if it is background knowledge, when they are in direct contact.

**Robert/LU**: We should help our members – give knowledge and capacity. Make an evaluation of the National Reform Programme. You can compile all the national reports. We make comments on it. The final Report is built from 28 national reports. We have to read our own report and the overarching. The Secretariat: needs to see to it that the language is simple

**Sérgio/PT**: The Social Situation Report.. We could have a social situation report raising 2 issues in your countries. 2 main facts we want to raise; It could be different for each country. Based on facts. In the end it would be simpler and have a lot more impact.

**Jeanne/FR**: Each country would send three priorities – burning issues at national level. They come to the European level, that would indeed be a good idea.

**Katharina/CZ**: We would need to be careful how it is framed. Another possibility would be to just focus on one thing.

**Group 2**

**Participants:** Gunvi/SE, Letizia/IT, Elke/BE, Paul/IE, Iris/RO, Joanna/HU, Sonja/NL, Kamila/PL.

**Chair:** Paul/IE ; **Rapporteur:** Vincent/MT; **Note-taker**: Sian.

**Question 1**

**Gunvi/SE** – idea of the pilot projects is very good, but not so fond of the social situation reports, as few members have capacity. We won’t do it. We haven’t enough resources.

**Letizia/IT** – studying the whole situation is very difficult, unless you have organisations that do that anyway to provide the info – ie Roma, homeless. Other alternative is to have 2 or 3 target issues every year.. not everything. We’d have to agree it

**Elke/BE** – the EUISG tried the social situation reports last year, developing a joint template with FR, IT, and BE, but few countries did it and it wasn’t very effective. We didn’t find it was very useful, and there was no translation.

**Paul/IE** – how could it be more useful?

**Elke/BE** - we need to be more creative on the actions and make more creative documents or other communication tools. On the national level, there are so many documents, the quality of the documents is appreciated, but the impact is limited. We don’t have the capacity in the Belgian network to do it either.

**Gunvi/SE** – what is the added value of EAPN doing the social situation report? Why not Eurostat or NRP..? Some voices from people in poverty are very important not just statistics.

**Vincent/MT** – Malta focussed on themes ie child poverty, and the Minister came to a seminar, then one on old-age and pensions, then precarious work. These seminars involve European Parliament and other stakeholders. We made a report from this.

**Iris/RO** – We are interested to do some regional work, with Hungary and candidate countries, because we work together and share similar experiences. We agree the awareness-raising and capacity building is more interesting rather than social situation reports. Also building alliances.

**Joanna/HU** – When we had the campaign on the European elections, we had to find a local interest topic. We found this to be minimum income. This maybe needs to be the basis. But what’s the capacity within EAPN, perhaps we can build an expert list.

**Sian/secretariat** – We did this kind of mapping last year in the EUISG but good to update it.

**Paul/IE** – We still need to do common reports and work on NRP and CSRs: can we do those in a different way?

**Elke/BE** – It’s a good idea to concentrate on CSRs, compared to NRPs. The effect is growing, eg with Marian Thyssen’s hearing. We could have our shadow recommendations and then show reactions.

**Paul/IE** – The difficulty is that these are the Commission’s proposals. If we don’t engage/respond to the NRPs we have no basis for engagement with our national governments.

**Kamila/PL** – EAPN PL decided to do a social situation report. We organized a project, 15 reports on different areas. We had an advisory committee, and worked for free but now the question is what to do with it?

**Sonja/NL** – we had to contact the union of municipalities, because of a new law at local and regional law. Then we work together for the EU level with the preparation of the PEP meeting.

**Gunvi/SE** - CSRs are important, governments say that NRPs are not important. But we think the CSRs are rather dangerous, because they have a neo-liberal hidden agenda. Support the idea of more regional activities as a way of coming closer to the member organisations. For example - Nordic countries – we can relate to the same welfare systems so arrangements can be more cost effective.

**Heidi/IC** -Iceland’s not in Europe 2020, how can we improve engagement in policy – how to make a better impact?

**Letizia/IT**-The key question is to whom this report should go – I agree with more focus on the CSRs, not on the NRPs. Social Reports should have an outside impact to the media. Our strength is the voice of people experiencing poverty.

**Question 2**

**Paul: Can we share more? More about capacity building or exchange? Ie macro-economic areas – tax etc. what about sub-groups**.

**Sonja/NL** – It would be good if we did more preparation like PEP meeting, before coming to the meetings. Also to have the powerpoints earlier.

**Gunvi/SE** – all participants are well connected to their national networks. There needs to be discussion between EXCO/EUISG about the group and its work- what are the most important issues?

**Elke/BE -** A key topic could be macroeconomic. We should have capacity building and invite key speakers from outside.

**Paul/IE** – people should have prepared it a bit beforehand, ie tax…that could really help capacity building.

**Joanna/HU** – Good to use more participatory techniques, when we are trying to engage with people at home, ie world café, campaign, community organizing techniques.

**Paul/IE** – Instead of having the fixed sub-groups, we could work in parallel on key topics/themes that the group agrees.

**Heidi/IC** – Empowering people is a very important topic. It would be great to exchange on this, and also about its use in recovery in mental health. People don’thave to be poor always.

**Gunvi/SE** – Bringing in outside speakers is a good idea. We are grass-roots organizations and don’t have access to experts.

**Group 3**

**Participants:** Nino  Žganec (EAN HR), Dag Westerheim (EAPN NO), Ole Meldgaard (EAPN DK), Marija Babović (EAPN SR), Marina Koukou (EAPN CY), Mia Carovska (MK EAPN), Norberts Snarskis (EAPN LV), Marjatta Kaurla (EAPN FI), Kiira Gornischeff (EAPN EE), Amana Ferro & Regina Mattsson (EAPN Secretariat)

**Rapporteur: Kiira Gornischeff (EE). Note taker:** Amana Ferro, EAPN Secretariat

**Question 1**

Considerations: Three countries in our group are not in the European Union (MK, SR, NO). One country is under Troika, so not engaging with Europe 2020 (CY). Only three countries in our group have paid staff for the National Network (ES, MK, NO) and one has a part-time worker only (FI).

**Katherine / UK** - Three people in our group are not in the European Union, so not working on Europe 2020. The proposals in the WP regarding the projects might be a good idea. We need a lot of capacity building to engage better, but we don’t have the money for that. It is difficult for us in the UK to engage at national level, as there is a lot of resistance to discussions about Europe.

**Marina / Cyprus** – There is a lot of scope to raise awareness about Europe 2020, a lot of people don’t know what it is. We need to do this especially for the social targets. It is difficult though, because logistics are expensive and time consuming.

**Marija / SR** – One idea is to organize webinars for members, they are more interactive and attractive than materials on paper.

**Graciela / ES** – This is a very good idea, but there is a lot of work to prepare them.

**Katherine / UK** – There is a difference between smaller scale capacity building in one’s organization or network, and broader awareness raising, reaching out to other stakeholders, which is very resource-intensive (money, but also time, staff etc).

**Marina / CY** – We need tools to raise awareness, but we need tools provided by the Secretariat for that, and the Secretariat does not have resources.

**Amana / Secretariat** – We produce toolkits and briefings and presentations, do capacity building, as well as exchanges and good practices from other members. We receive very little feedback on whether those are useful, if you disseminate them, if other tools are needed, and which.

**Marina / CY, Katherine / UK, Marija / SR** – The EMIN worked very well because it was tied to funding and we were obliged to follow through with the steps.

**Question 2**

**Ole / DK** – Each country has its own priorities, we can’t impose them top-down from Brussels. The discussion about poverty is much broader than Europe 2020, we need to see how to articulate the two.

**Marija / SR** – EMIN worked so well because it was focused on one topic, Europe 2020 is very broad. The Living Wage action might also work well because of the same reason.

**Kiira / EE** – If we sign a contract for funding, then we are obliged to deliver, and things work well. So the proposals in the work programme.

**Graciela / ES** – For instance, instead of analyzing the whole NRP, we can focus on specific issues and analyse those, as well as their consequences on the people of that specific policy. But it is difficult to do clusters, because it is hard to find one topic that everyone is interested in.

**Marjatta / FI** – What we need more in the EU ISG is group work, thematic work, dedicated to specific issues

**Katherine / UK** – We spend too much time on information. The documents sent in advance don’t need to be presented in plenary, people need to read them beforehand. We need discussions.

Key Messages

1. Raise awareness at the national level on Europe 2020 and the 5 targets, use the Toolkits or other tools already there, translate, simplify, and adapt them.
2. Study why EMIN was so successful and how to import best practices to our work – funding obligation, focused topic, clear timeline.
3. Create thematic subgroups to work on specific topics in depth, but all countries need to input, even if more minimally, for the final report. These should be even narrower than the three subgroups we had so far, which were still very vague.