

EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR A

DEMOCRATIC

SOCIAL **EUROPEAN SEMESTER**

SUSTAINABLE

Update on Semester Alliance/Jan 2015

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Enabling civil-society to participate in the shaping of EU policies and to contribute to progress on the Targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy concerns us all!

What is the Alliance?

- **A broad coalition bringing together 16 major EU civil society organisations + trade unions**, representing thousands of member organisations-EU, national, regional and local level.
- **Aims to support progress towards a more democratic, social and sustainable Europe 2020 strategy**, strengthening **civil dialogue** in the European Semester at national and EU levels.
- **Builds on Adhoc Coalition**, working with cross-party group of MEPs since 2011.
- **Project funded for 1 year by EC**, coordinated by EAPN



Who are the Alliance?

16 major EU networks/organizations working in the social, equality and environmental field :

- AGE-Platform Europe, Caritas Europa; European Environmental Bureau, CECODHAS- Housing Europe;
- European Association of Service Providers for persons with disabilities (EASPD), European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN), Eurochild;
- European Public Service Union (EPSU) and European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC);
- Eurodiaconia, European Women's Lobby (EWL);
- European Federation of National organisations working with the homeless (FEANTSA, European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA);
- Green Budget Europe, PICUM, Social Platform

Why an Alliance?

Disturbing lack of progress on Europe 2020 social + environmental targets

- **8 million more people in poverty** instead of taking at least 20 million out of poverty – shortfall of 28 million!
- **Decline in employment** to 68.4% instead of progress to 75%
- **Early School Leaving reduced** to 12.7% - shortfall of 2.7%
- **18% reduction in greenhouse emissions** but 13 MS won't reach target by 2020
- **Failure to mainstream equality/ including gender equality**

Why an Alliance?

Concerns about democratic legitimacy of the Strategy + European Semester

- European Semester primarily driven by economic governance goals, rather than Europe 2020
- Failure to engage civil society and social organisations meaningfully in the Semester process, particularly at national level (NRPs, CSRs)
- Weak involvement of national and EU Parliaments

Aims and Objectives

- **Achieve progress on a more democratic, social and sustainable EU Strategy** by improving civil society and social actor's engagement in the European Semester
- **Ensure all policies, including macroeconomic, contribute to social, environmental/climate targets** and equality commitments of Europe 2020 strategy
- **Improve the legitimacy of the EU strategy**, through strengthening the engagement of civil society and social organisations in the EU decision-making process, starting at the national level.

What Actions?

- **EU Advocacy Strategy** to engage with EU institutions and stakeholders/ EU Hearings/events.
- **A key new voice:** - information, dissemination, raising awareness (blog/social media).
- **3 National Pilot Alliances** – cross sectoral engagement in Semester: DK, IE and BG.
- **Capacity building** of members: national /EU: Tool Kit, and capacity building
- **Joint reports/inputs** – eg CSR proposals/ Joint Assessment European Semester and Europe 2020

Update – Finalizing Project, Advocacy for future funding

- **Finalizing Semester Alliance report**
Hearing in EP hosted by MEPs - December 3
2014 followed by **national exchange meeting.**
- **Toolkit translations: FR, IT, DE, HU, BG, FI, ES.**
- **Development of Video/Banner** and roll up
- **Evaluation Report and Final Reports –
national and EU**
- **Presentation to Annual Convention**
- **Advocacy** continuation of funding: mtg Servoz

Key Learning

- External Evaluation being carried out by December with questionnaires and focus group discussion – EU/national

Key Benefits

- deepening and exchanging knowledge
- cross-sectoral working brings broader vision
- stronger identity and profile, potential for impact
- building capacity –tool kit/capacity building workshop
- national pilot alliances a strong added value for members and Commission

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Alliances at National Level

Three national alliances to pilot broad, cross-sectoral alliances to engage in the Semester:

- **Joint approach** to national collaboration on Europe 2020 through the European Semester
- **Builds on existing work with the Semester**
- **Joint engagement** in the National Reform programmes, the CSRs and the AGS.
- **Lead organisations to: develop the pilot national alliance actions involving a broad range of organisations** from social, environmental and other sectors – building on pre-existing co-operation

Irish EU Semester Alliance Update

➤ Key Actions Oct-Dec

- 4th November – Meeting with Dept of Prime Minister – Taoiseach
- 2 meetings with Joint Oireachtas (**Parliament**) Ctee on EU Affairs.
- 5th December National Conference, **publication** and Video on Better Alliance
- 2nd Dec meeting with EC Commission including Dir General: Servoz
- Submissions on CSRs and Mid-Term Review
- Internal workshops in Alliance organisations on Semester and workshop on taxation

➤ Key Learning

- **Needs an investment of time**
- **Opportunity to deepen and pool knowledge among members and engage collectively**
- **Important to reflect different views. Maybe reaching a common position on issues.**
- **Challenge of working as an alliance while maintaining the visibility of individual organisations**
- **Alliance brings greater visibility and access**
- **Actual impact still unknown**

Danish EU Semester Alliance Update

➤ Key Actions

- **Meetings: 16 Sept and 26 November**
- **Roundtable Conference held on 4th September** (alliance members, officials from the Ministry who coordinate the Semester, Parliament, Ministry of Social Affairs. ESO invited – clarified key themes
- **5th November Conference – New Strategies for Growth – presentation of common paper, involvement of ministries**
- **Participation in EU event on 3 Dec**
- **Working on common input to CSRs**

➤ Key Learning

- **Very useful, raising awareness, developing capacity**
- **Strengthening cross-sectoral joint work and vision – new common strategies for growth**
- **Difficulties of developing joint positions/ future uncertain without funding**

Bulgaria National Alliance



Key Actions Oct-Dec

- Launched in May with 5 meetings planned
- Joint report for NRP and CSRs and recommendations for AGS report
- Translation and dissemination of EU toolkit
- Meetings with government officials, national Parliament, SPC member
- Final Conference in November

Key Learning

- Highly appreciated by all partners to strengthen co-working and impact.
- Main achievement the report, building awareness, consensus and basis for common action – helped rethink approach to EU policy
- Potential for big impact on improvement of Semester governance, CSOs
- Need for EU to press for structured role of stakeholders or hard to make progress

Discussion Points

- 1) What are the main learning points?
- 2) What next steps are planned?
- 3) Do we want to take forward the alliances at national level, how can this be