**Task Force on Stakeholder Engagement – 17th December 2013.**

**Participants**: Kalle Laane (EAPN EE), Isabel Allende (EAPN ES), Reka Tunyogi (Eurochild), Natasha Najdenovalevic (EAPN MA), Elke Vandermeerschen and Paul Rosiers (BAPN), Macej Kucharczyk (AGE-Platform)k, Sian Jones & Nellie Epinat (EAPN Secretariat)

**Apologie**s: Sonja Wallbom

**Secretariat:** Sian Jones (EAPN Policy Coordinator)

**Initial exchange:** what was our experience working in this TF ?

* Macej and Natasha: How we will disseminate and use it as a meaningful tool – trying to convince our interlocutors. How will we sell it ?
* Kalle and Isabella - a good step but not the last step – in Estonia, it might be useful to develop this work with special groups in general.
* Reka, Paul and Elke – happy that we did a lot in the last meeting,.and with the draft.

1. Minutes – Reka is from Hungary
2. Agenda was agreed with no changes.
3. Discussion on first draft:

Introduction by Elke: – it was very easy as we’d agreed the structure, and also the content, I got very good input from people, made it very interesting. It’s a very rich group with EO’s and experts of experience and national level, which really helps. I took most of the comments on board.

Some remarks I didn’t put in, this didn’t have anything to do with the quality of the remarks. I tried to focus on the subject and the target audience i.e. not participation in general, or stakeholder involvement, but the process of stakeholder involvement linked to fight against poverty and the 2020 agenda. Sometime we have to focus more and we have to repeat some things. Thanks a lot and it’s pleasure to work with you all !

**General comments**

* Macej – I like the title and the fact that it’s getting inspiration from the work by age. We need to be as precise and convincing as we can. It’s very pro-active and dynamic. I liked the idea of the myths – they are all the arguments that you usually hear. Already the lay-out is good, and it’s not too packed and easier to read – we have to avoid being too long and its’ a very practical document.
* Natasha – I read more that 6 or 7 handbooks, a lot are very academic - with a lot of information, but I think it’s important that ours is very clear and that ordinary people can also use it. In the last mail, I sent information on the local level. In Serbia – there are more obstacles for useful cooperation, but there are some good examples in Hungary, and local agreements in the UK. For the concrete steps, about the legal framework, in this handbook, we only talk about the Lisbon treaty and EU docs, we could widen this. We could take research data, e.g. in Macedonia we need capacity building for NGO's, to make research, it's expensive. Some countries give premises to NGO's, access to internet, ... some countries which couldn't do that, couldn't engage anybody. We could use some of these different examples, also from the other countries. Also we can take into consideration the barriers, which depend on the mentality to give money because of political bias – NGOs who are not close to the authorities can’t get money.
* Isabella: the document in general is very good: clear, simple and comprehensive and short, otherwise policy makers don’t take time to read it. For people who know about it, it’s not boring – they learn something. And people who don’t know anything – it’s clear and understandable.
* Kalle: I’m happy too, in general, but later we will go into the detail and discuss good material for next steps.
* Reka: it’s very well put together with a clear structure and lay-out, which is very helpful. I like the bubbles – the myths are powerful. I have a question on the scope of the document. At the moment it’s very much linked to EU 2020 and to antipoverty strategies. I would like to see it cover also Structural Funds, so we need more reference to Cohesion policy . The other issue is if we focus only on poverty policy or broader.. e.g. – people who are affected – i.e. anti-poverty policy – involving children. For the title it should make clear that it’s related to Europe - it’s our EU.
* Paul: the handbook is good. We experience more & more poverty in Europe, and the strategy does it achieve anything? Can we make pressure that they make progressive rules on the fight against poverty – more on the content. We have many stakeholders. But not a good voice or good pressure.
* Sian: I’m very happy with the first draft and the clear structure. I think that Elke did a great job. Some issues about the scope we need to clarify, is it focussed on people experiencing poverty, antipoverty NGOs or broader stakeholders ? Feel that we need to be clear that our priority is to ensure that all stakeholders are equally treated, our priority is to ensure that PEP and NGOs are brought to the table. The Structure is a bit repetitive, and may need more explanation. The myths – glad people are positive about them, but probably we need more myths and we and need to see where they go. We’re still missing national, regional and local examples and should give more detail on the how – the methodology is crucial.
* Nellie: I’m bringing a fresh look to it. I’ve tried to organize my comments. I was surprised by the title – snappy title, and that it was short. Straight-forward and to the point. Well-organized graphically speaking as well. I was missing a strong statement at the beginning, we’re missing a strong message and wasn’t sure whether the core principles are the common principles. I would explain how the book is structured. We could have country examples at the end of each section. The myths are very good . We are targeting at decision-makers who are not involving people and it challenges – it makes it less academic. We have to face the problems of budget and the fact that we can print very few documents. I’m also thinking of translation. External lay-out is more expensive than in-house and will be easier to translate.
* Decision-makers are human beings and will appreciate something that is nice to look at, and we should make it readable for the largest public that is possible. Decision-makers at local level are really general public. We are already more than half way there. We should have a clear definition of stakeholders, mention civil society organisations – in the definition sections.
* The cover should really reinforce the main message.
* We should make it clear at the beginning that the lack of stakeholder engagement is a problem - be a bit sharper on the issue that it’s a promise.

**Discussion on Question of scope:**

* Sian: we should keep it focussed on Europe 2020 and poverty, as this is our added value, but we can make references to wider policies and other examples of engagement in policy making processes, particularly at the national level. Cohesion should get a mention but not too much detail. EAPN will prepare a Tool Kit on new SF OPs.
* Kalle: What is the quality of the results ? Maybe it’s good to show how the engagement processes are connected with results, with the quality of the decisions ?
* Elke: I agree it’s not clear – I understood that we agreed to focus it on Europe 2020 and mention other elements, like EU funds, but not go into it. The sub-title doesn’t mention that – we should be more clear in the sub-title. We can mention examples with children.
* Reka: I would like to bring the example of influencing the Northern Ireland child poverty strategy.
* Macej: Europe 2020 gives the overall framework and the EAPN focus is the poverty target – these are the instruments that help advance on Europe 2020, here we make a proposal on how to build common ownership. This may also be missing. We should start with the issue of ownership at the beginning – Say immediately more clearly what we want. Employment is also a concern as well as social protection. More recognition of Social OMC at the beginning

**Conclusion**: we keep the frame of Europe 2020 but we can also give examples that are broader or are about specific groups

**A discussion was held on each section of the document, suggestions are processed in the second draft.**

**Some conclusions of the discussions:**.

We should stick to the amount of pages – not much longer… try to reduce in other areas

Expand Introduction to include a stronger messages – why we are doing this, what are knowledge base is – ie EAPN work with PEP and stakeholder engagement, and the scope of the handbook. Use some quotes from PEP and decision makers although the latter could be on the back cover.

Also prepare another short section on acknowledgements – describing who is involved and how the handbook has been prepared.

Each chapter should have a short introduction

We should have an extra chapter Resources/contacts and Bibliography.

* Provide EU level contacts and acknowledgements.
* ACTION \_members to provide their own proposals.

Myths: We keep the idea, but need more proposals on formulation:

1. **It wastes time**

* Achieveing consensus needs time
* Doing it properly
* Proper consultation saves time.
* Political choices

1. **How do we know who these stakeholders are - they are representative?**

* Should be individual examples.
* How membership is built? Members should space.- representativesness.
* /same rules to all stakeholders .Unequal treatment.

1. **It costs too much money,**

* It doesn’t cost too much money – small proportion compared to overall budgets.
* It’s an investment not a cost – empowerment.
* By asking people what they would like – what they say can cost less?
* What’s the price of truth! Concrete knowledge is priceless. Wasted if not used.
* Cost of not involving people
* Bureaucracy creates costs, that come with the wrong solutions, which can be ore costly.
* Must be proportionate, and correctly administered.

1. **It doesn’t bring any immediate benefits**

* Brings longer term benefits /longer term process

1. **People experiencing poverty can’t participate on an equal level**
2. **Our policies are already effective without all this**
3. **Policy making is too technical for ordinary people** to be involved and we have our own experts.

**Next steps**

* Members to send input by 20th January – national/regional and local examples, and on the myths – this will be circulated. Also send quotes from PEP and decision-makers?
* Elke to finalize 2nd draft by 31st January.
* Discussion on 2nd draft in EUISG
* Revised draft then to be discussed in the final meeting in March.

1. **Communication/Agreeing the format**.

* Internal design, but printing is likely to be limited.
* Word document so not too many pictures – can be translated.
* Maximum 20 pages- maximum of 5 pictures.
* Cover is printed in colour and inside in black and white. Go for 4 colours.
* Aiming at EU level, so need to have a good looking paper version – without a handbook.
* Could ask in the context of the Peer Review if there’s a Federal Budget, producing documents, supported by….
* Nellie will ask Rebecca, produce a quote for a 20 page document in 3 colours.. Printing and quality of paper. Need colour in the on-line version.
* Photo on the front cover - needs to embody the main message: meeting? Equality of speech? Better decision-making. But limit numbers.Giving the red card.

**ACTION**

* Send ideas of photos and images for front cover and inside.

1. **Action Note and Capacity Building.**

One of the objectives is to go back to the EU Inclusion Strategies group and produce an Action Note and organize a capacity building session.

On the Action Note:What do we want? What would our colleagues need to use this and get the knowledge, should we give advise on when and how to use it.

* Link new handbooks with existing documents of EAPN.
* Say how to reach people with this document.
* Raising awareness and capacity building.
* Should explain that it’s a document that will remain valid for some time, and it’s to defend a process,
* The focus should be on how to sell it? Now and in the future.
* Link the dissemination to the consultation with the European Semester. By the way – more on governance – ie Europe 2020.
* The who – who they should focus on, how they should do it, and when
* Explaining what it is, and shouldn’t replace the tool kit on specific tips.
* Kalle – it’s about implementation of the document practically – depends on local circumstances, maybe it could be financed by projects, could develop a training programme.
* Macej: Year 2014 – will be a continuation of the EU year of citizens continuation. Should use that… and our involvement in the NRPs. Why we didn’t mention members of National Parliament!
* **Capacity building with the EUIS**
* NATASHA: Concrete criteria how to assess – how is it working – checklist? 2 possibilities – we need to assess the real effectiveness of the processes. How is it working, then make proposals for improving it. How the handbook can help civil servants – we want you to apply these, and then we’ll assess how well it worked. Eg – A govt advised that NGOs should work on their own, better preparation of inputs.
* Make the interconnections between the MASS and previous work in this area ie how members can be more effective in influencing policy making.
* Elke – useful to start from the Action how can you use it, what’s it meant for.
* Then think about the actual state of play, then do the excercize – how can this handbook to diagnose and make a proposals.

**ACTION**

* Propose on an Action Note with a checklist by the End of January.
* Work with it on the final meeting.
* Action \_ end of April.

1. **Final Event and Dissemination**

* **Decision on whether meeting combined with launch – pro’s and con’s on each side.**
* Launch – should be focussed on Commission and Permanent representations/ Political groups – but less focus on elections.
* Agreed that we should not focus on MEPs and mix with election activities – which are much broader.
* A key focus could be CoR or EESC : might be interested.
* Timing: Around mid April
* PEP Event, possibility of a side event or use this for the launch?

**Decisions**

* Because of the uncertainty of funding, agreed to programme a full working working meeting 12th March.
* In the meantime Sian will inform the group in January of the stage of the budget and implications, and the group can decide to change the date to try to combine with a launch..We will give information on the funding and make a decision.

**Evaluation**

* Very efficient group – as satisfied: Macej
* Natasha good working and useful product for the target group.
* Isabelle – very active group, now really tiring.
* Kalle – Thanks you, it’s OK, constructive work model. All the things fit well with EMIN and other project. Have some ideas and topics for discussion in Estonia. I want this powerful message from PEP.
* Reka: Good progress, feeling inspired but tired.
* Paul – good constructive work together
* Elke -also very happy, and reading the document again, but not sure about it, but now think we’ve reached the 2nd level. Nice to work with you.
* Sian: Very pleased, great group with good and useful participation from all - makes it very rich. Think the product will be good. Slightly more concerned about how it will be used, and really mobilizing members around it. Recognize these TF meetings are very demanding/tiring – and thank people for their work.