

## **Pillar 1 – Ability to Influence decision-makers – advocacy, lobbying and policy-making**

### **Strategy for approaching decision-makers by EAPN Czech Republic**

*Notes from presentation by Karel Schwarz at the capacity building seminar November 28-29, 2014*

EAPN Czech Republic's strategy to build dialogue with policy and decision-makers was built in 4 steps. Some were more successful than others.

Step 1: Establishing and building a relation with three relevant ministries, responsible for Social Affairs, Education and Health.

The context has not allowed for cooperation with these Ministries, especially because of their over-bureaucratized approach to policy-making and to a conflict of understanding how progressive policies could be implemented.

Step 2: Establishing and building relations with the Parliament and through it, engaging relevant Ministries

The advantages are that the relevant Committees in the Parliament were open for cooperation, the facilities can be used free of charge and that is a big advantage to volunteer-based organisations and platforms and the Ministry representatives must attend meetings that the Committees organise. As such, this has helped to build some dialogue with decision-makers, and helped with some initial steps in dialogue with policy-makers coming from the three ministries. Progress has not been as much as EAPN Czech Republic would have hoped but this is definitely the right approach.

Step 3: Furthermore, EAPN Czech Republic has tried to get recognition of the voluntary sector (a legal basis for many of its service providing members, and not only) as part of Platforma NNO (broad NGO Platform equivalent to Social Platform in the country).

Step 4: To reach this recognition, EAPN Czech Republic has signed several agreements with regions (regions have a lot of autonomy in the Czech Republic) – at the moment it has agreement with 9 regions and 3 other ones cooperate and there are a few left without cooperation. In addition, the Network has tried to cooperate with the Association of Municipalities in Czech Republic, which are the local level responsible directly for many social services, minimum income benefits and other aspects related to anti poverty work. Hence, this cooperation has been very important for the Czech Network.

For example, two regions, including the one around Prague, are considering introducing a post at local level that would take responsibility for several services to people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. This is an important initiative and the Network is hoping that through the cooperation with the Association of Municipalities, such an initiative can be proposed for all those in the association (not all municipalities are part of this association).

In terms of a successful action in 2013, the Czech Network organised a very good national meeting of people experiencing poverty in Ostrava, in another region than Prague, which gave an important impetus to the network's activity on this Pillar 2. The other action was the EMIN conference in the parliament with very good attendance – important in bringing the concept of adequate minimum income to the country.

Challenges for the network remain funding and building an economic base for the network.