**COMM’ON Guidelines – Break-out Session 1**

**Participants**: Judith/BAPN, Olav/EAPN NO, Aleksandra/EAPN HR, Jeanne/EAPN FR, Fran/IFSW, Sonja/EAPN NL, Katherine/EAPN UK, Magda/EAPN Staff, Sian/EAPN Staff.

Opportunities and challenges were taken together. No real answers were given to Q 3, as the group wanted to discuss the overall issues more broadly.

**Judith/BAPN**

* We need to look at the 2 parts participation and communication. For us the opportunity is that we talk about participation and how to do it at national and EU level. We need to improve and do better, talk about it openly. We also need to see how we address it together.
* The main challenge is lack of resources (both money and people) and the need for real discussions about how we introduce participation better in the policy proposal process and in communication.

**Olav/EAPN NO**

* We are a member of the COMM’ON group, and so have participated in the discussions. We see it as a tool-box that can help us start the work. We recognize that some groups don’t have the resources, and can only start with small steps, whilst others can think about extending elements.
* The main challenges are obviously resources, but the focus should be on just how to improve.

**Sonja/EAPN NL**

* This is a chance to really involve people experiencing poverty and put them at the centre of Social Europe. They must be equal, give them the chance. But also recognize that it is not always easy to work on technical policies, and they will need support.
* There needs to be short concrete guidelines on the next steps to take. We had a person in the COMM’ON group.

**Aleksandra/EAPN HR**

* The opportunities are to strengthen participation, and this seems a very good tool. We have seen with the work with journalists talking to PeP how powerful this can be to give voice and no political rhetoric.
* We are a very small network and it’s not easy to see how we can have 1 person working on Communications.

**Jeanne/EAPN FR**

* The French network has a working group on participation and we can build on these guidelines
* Challenges – we have no Comms officer, and no perspective to get on. We’ll try to adapt and see how we can work better. Time is a big issue – if we’re asking people to give their time should be pay them for it?
* The issue of plain language? It’s not so clear, and how to do more virtual communication.

**Fran/IFSW**

* The main issue is how participation and policy work can be strengthened and united. But we need more discussion on this model and how to interpret or implement it.
* Plain language is very important, but we need to be clear what the policy work is for and who it is targeted at.. is it aimed to everybody? Or to the policy makers? It’s important to make policy work more accessible – this could be done by summaries/glossaries
* Our current documents are good, but maybe members need this support, and this can be motivating to learn to engage with these policies and policy makers.

**Judith/BAPN**

* Our policy worker are translators – We need to take EU and national policy and carry messages to people experiencing poverty and the other way round
* I have concerns about ‘Plain Language’ as we cannot make our policy documents simplistic. We need to influence EU and national decision makers, and this needs sometimes complex documents.
* We should also think about how we ‘translate’ these position/documents into easier to read ones – but not every document.

**Sonja/EAPN NL**

* Money is a big problem – if you want to involve people facing poverty, at least paying their expenses.

**Katherine/EAPN UK**

* The benefits of better participation in policy work, is that it can be very effective, we know from the UK experience, but it’s a challenge to do it effectively and consistently and needs a lot of resources which we don’t have.
* We should separate out the participation and the communication issues. Are we talking about tailoring communication to different audiences? Or how to promote participation.. these are different issues and not clear, or the link to overall policy work.

**Magda/EAPN Staff**

* We need more discussion. We only focussed on participation and communication, as they were not meaningfully. We did not develop the policy part, we recognize that.
* It could be a very positive outcome to set up a joint group/discussion with the EUISG?

**Judith/BAPN**

* We need to be clear about implementation – are these obligatory guidelines? On the Comms side there is very little focus, and there needs to be more discussion about it’s link to the policy work. It’s too soon to try to implement it, before we get this clear.

**Katherine/EAPN UK**

* There is a lot of experience in the UK, developing basic principles. Poverty Alliance has community groups of people experiencing poverty but they are in a separate part.
* EAPN has operated until now as an ‘intermediary’… (with and for). We have to be clear about whether this is now to change? You can work with, for or by. If ‘by’ is the new objective this is a very different organization, and this needs to be transparent.
* We can start the journey, but we need to be clear about where we want to get to!