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**Using the Structural Funds for social inclusion**

***Final text***

***May 2014***

This leaflet on how Structural Funds are used for social inclusion was compiled by EAPN Members (including the members of the former EAPN’s Structural Funds Working Group). Thanks go to all those members who researched and contributed individual good practice examples.

**1 A new context: *Europe 2020* and Structural Funds**

According to Eurostat, 119,6 million people are considered to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion[[1]](#footnote-1) in the EU. This represents 24,2% in the population, with poverty and social exclusion visibly increasing following the economic crisis which began in 2008, and exacerbated by the austerity measures taken by many Member States, which have intensified the hardship of people experiencing poverty.[[2]](#footnote-2) This difficult backdrop frames a key moment in the evolution of the European Union, marked by the coming mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy[[3]](#footnote-3) and the first year of the new EU Budget as well as the new programming period of Structural Funds 2014-2020.One of the major shift in the cohesion Policy 2014-2020 is that Structural Funds will be used more than ever to contribute to the delivery on the Europe 2020 headline targets including the Poverty reduction target (i.e. to lift 20 million people out of poverty by 2020 in the EU) that EAPN together with other social NGOs managed to get. Such a delivery on Europe 2020 headline targets is now enshrined in the whole European Semester process starting from the Annual Growth Survey presented late November by the European Commission. This document sets out the policy priorities that Member States are encouraged to follow for the coming year. Based on the AGS and the country specific recommendations proposed by the European Commission then endorsed by the Council, Member States should formulate their National Reform Programmes (and National Social Reports). In the NRPs, Member States should clearly report on a yearly basis how they use Structural Funds to deliver on the Europe 2020 headline targets.

As we will see later further down, Structural Funds 2014-2020 will play a powerful role in backing financially the EU commitments of Member States to deliver on the poverty reduction target. With a stronger focus on social inclusion (especially in the ESF) and a better promotion of bottom-up and community-led approaches, Structural Funds 2014-2020 provide a more favorable legal framework for **more funding opportunities for social NGOs.**

Structural Funds for the programming period 2014-2020 amount to 352 € billion. For the first time, the **ESF national budgets are secured, with the mandatory minimum of 23,1% of the total SF national allocation**. Another major novelty that should ensure a decisive contribution of the European Social Fund to the poverty reduction target is the 20% of the ESF earmarked on poverty reduction.

Since more than 10 years, EAPN has acquired a long standing experience in helping NGOs to access Structural Funds and in promoting social inclusion during the programming periods 2000-2006, 2007 – 2013 and 2014 – 2020. In the context of preparation of the operational programmes at national and regional level, it is now timely for EAPN to make NGOs benefitting its Members’ expertise to help them to design projects that will boost the delivery on the poverty reduction target through Structural Funds.

The objective of this leaflet is twofold:

* Help NGOs to understand the new opportunities of the Structural Funds 2014-2020 to better promote social inclusion/ poverty reduction and ensure a better involvement in Structural Funds’ processes
* Provide tools for NGOs to build up a good project that can match the new requirements of the Structural Funds’ Regulations 2014-2020 on poverty reduction and partnership including by outlining EAPN’s guiding principles to assess a good practice of SF-funded project on social inclusion and by showcasing good practices of Structural Funds’ projects.
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**2 Using Structural Funds for social inclusion**

In the new Cohesion Policy 2014-2020, all Structural Funds should deliver on the poverty reduction target and promote social inclusion. . The European Social Fund (ESF) offers possibilities for the provision of a broad range of socially integrated programmes, services and projects, not just training for those in the labour market, that can reach out to a wide range of groups of people who are currently excluded from the labour market; while the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) offers potential for building up the necessary social infrastructure. The new Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)[[4]](#footnote-4) gives new possibilities to fund social inclusion activities. Here, we look at opportunities in the new legislative framework (2014-2020(2.1), EAPN action (2.2))

**2.1**. **A higher profile given to social inclusion/ poverty reduction & NGO involvement in the programming period 2014-2020**

The new funding period of Structural Funds for 2014-2020 does represent a step forward by better promoting bother social inclusion/ poverty reduction as well as the partnership principle.

1. Structural Funds to deliver on the poverty reduction target
* Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty is clearly listed as a common thematic objective for all Structural Funds
* The ESF now really appears as THE EU Fund to deliver on the poverty reduction target with important positive novelties:
* The so-called minimum shares which imply:
	+ An increased and secured ESF Budget: a minimum share for the ESF, representing at least 25% of the budget allocated to Cohesion Policy (i.e. around EUR 81 billion).
	+ A minimum ring-fencing allocation of 20% dedicated to promoting social inclusion and combating poverty.
	+ Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty clearly identified as one of the four thematic objectives (including through active inclusion approaches)
* An ex-ante conditionality on poverty reduction requiring from Managing Authorities to check the pre-existence of an integrated anti-poverty strategy at national level that should be adequately funded by EU Funds.
* ERDF clearly contains one investment priority on “Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty” through investments in health and social infrastructures/ physical and economic regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities/ support for social enterprises
* FEAD could fund either food aid/ material support or social inclusion activities.
1. Welcome improvements on the partnership principle and NGO access to Structural Funds
* The partnership principle is more binding. It implies both NGOs involvement in the preparation of Partnership Agreements as well as at all stages of OPs (including possibilities to get funding for capacity-building in the ESF Regulation)
* A new EU tool: the European code of conduct on partnership which is a non-binding document aiming at guiding managing authorities in applying the partnership principle in the new programming period from the selection of the partners to get involved in the programming till the evaluation of Structural Funds’ programmes.
* Community-led local development approaches is mainstreamed in all Structural Funds which should increase the potential for bottom-up approaches/ projects putting people experiencing poverty and their needs at the center.
* A simplified delivery system aims at encouraging and facilitating the use of flat rates and lump sums for small projects

**2.2 The potential under *Europe 2020***

The *Europe 2020 Strategy* makes it clear that Structural Funds are expected to make a substantial contribution to achieving the headline objectives in reducing poverty and social inclusion, increasing employment and bettering education outcomes. Structural Funds are explicitly tied to these targets. This contribution should be reflected in the annual National Reform Programmes presented by Member States to the Commission.

1. **The support of the European Platform against Poverty**

The European Platform against Poverty establishes a framework for action to support delivery on the poverty reduction target, emphasizes the need for more targeted and effective use of ERDF and ESF through:

* A simplified access and delivery for the ESF for small NGOs through an easier access to global grants (“tailor-made schemes”)
* An improved access to funds for groups facing poverty and social exclusion extreme poverty and multiple disadvantage including Roma;
1. **The Social Investment Package in a snapshot**

It aims at helping MSs to implement the SF’s priorities on social inclusion (especially ESF)

The guiding principle in the Communication is to use EU funds to foster an inclusive growth by using funds for “employment, human capital development, modernisation of public services, territorial investment and social inclusion. A new term is used ESIF (European Structural and Investment funds.**) to** underline the need to complement ESF with ERDF i.e. in investing in childcare, health, housing and education infrastructure. A communication on the use of ESF (with a focus on social innovation, social economy and social entrepreneurship, testing innovative approaches and then up-scaling them) followed by an operational policy guidance document aiming at ensuring that more Structural Funds’ investments will reflect the SIP priorities

**2.3 EAPN key principles**

EAPN takes the view that because anti-poverty NGOs work closely with people experiencing poverty, they are in a strong position to propose effective social inclusion solutions and to deliver them through grass-roots Structural Funds programmes and projects. EAPN actively encourages its member organizations to participate in the Funds accordingly.

Since the beginning of its creation, EAPN has been promoting social inclusion especially through a greater involvement of social NGOs in Structural Funds. To encourage such participation, EAPN published three manuals on the role of Structural Funds for social inclusion NGOs (1999, 2005, 2008), subsequently translated into different languages in the Member States.

Building on its long-standing experience in helping social NGOs to access Structural Funds, EAPN wants to strengthen NGOs’ capacity to run successfully Structural Funds’ projects on social inclusion/ poverty reduction.

In doing so, EAPN provides below some guiding principles to help social NGOs assessing what is a good practice/ project on social inclusion/ poverty reduction funded by Structural Funds.

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| **Good practices of SF-funded projects - EAPN’s guiding principles**1. **An integrated, personalized and a multi-dimensional approach to social** inclusion which entails:
* Integrated Active Inclusion frameworks with personalized pathways to inclusion, quality work and social protection that imply support for people to access adequate minimum income, access to services (including accessible, affordable housing, transport, care and healthcare services) and inclusive labour markets;
* The delivery of innovative social service that meet local needs, such as community and care services (ESF) and social service infrastructure (ERDF);
* A lifecycle approach that addresses the exclusion of children and older people;
* Support for social innovation, the social economy
* Support to quality job creation, especially in the green, white and social economy; investment in personalized support for people furthest from the labour market; fighting discrimination in access to jobs, services, rights and resources.
1. **Make sure that the project effectively targets and assists hard-to-reach, disadvantaged groups** (such as long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, migrants, ethnic minorities, marginalized communities including Roma, women, lone parents, homeless people)
2. **Promote NGO-driven delivery mechanism**:
* First of all, at programme level, check if NGOs have been appointed as intermediary bodies to manage grants (i.e. global grants) : these grants are usually well-designed, accessible to small NGOs.
* Secondly, at project level, ask your managing authority to make available technical assistance and capacity-building to help you in the running of your project.
1. **Put people experiencing poverty at the center** by:
* Promoting social participation and empowering activities
* Making use of the new potential with Community-led local initiatives allowing bottom-up approaches involving people experiencing poverty from the design till the assessment of the project.
1. **Get involved in transnational activities** todeliver innovative services and products to meet new community needs and help disadvantaged groups of people
2. **Make sure that the project has long-lasting effects** (after the duration of the project) with genuine positive social outcomes for final beneficiaries and that these effects are being adequately measured through social inclusion indicators (increased confidence, self-esteem, a sustainable work contract above the minimum wage after x months…) and with a participatory social evaluation system involving people experiencing poverty.
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**3 Showcase of good practices**

As part of its work in promoting the use of Structural Funds for social inclusion the EAPN Members contributed the following examples of good practice. EAPN sought national case studies which, as much as possible, reflected one of more of the EAPN’s key guiding principles outlined in 2.3. characteristics.

Between them, these 16 examples illustrate how Structural Funds projects reach people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, implement Active Inclusion approaches, use pioneering methods, drive up standards and use effective delivery systems. They are divided into:

3.1 An integrated, personalized and multi-dimensional approach to social inclusion

3.2 Reaching hard-to-reach/ disadvantaged groups of people

3.3 Promote NGO-driven delivery mechanisms

3.4 Put people experiencing poverty at the center

3.5 Invest in transnational activities

**3.1 An integrated, personalized and multi-dimensional approach to social inclusion**

***Implementing integrated Active Inclusion approaches***

Here is a project that illustrates an integrated Active Inclusion approach, drawn from Portugal. It shows the importance of combining the 3 pillars of active inclusion (adequate minimum income, quality services and inclusive labour markets) through a start-to finish approach that begins with initial training, leads to on-the-job-training and concludes with ready-for-work certification; recruiting participants through outreach (street work, rather than schools); the provision of a comprehensive range of services (e.g. counseling). It also shows how services must be low-threshold, offer non-threatening space and make them easy for disadvantaged, possibly alienated people to use.

***Janus*, Portugal**

The *Janus* project is operated by the European Anti-Poverty Network Portugal under the *Operational Programme for human potential*, measure *6.1 Training for inclusion*. The name Janus was chosen because in Roman mythology it opened doors and symbolized beginnings and new development. Its aim is to provide skills and abilities training for people in receipt of the guaranteed minimum income. . Most come from a disadvantaged background. The project is provided in a disadvantaged area in partnership with local social services. The Janus project provides a training course of 400 hours; on-the-job training of 400 hours; competence assessment at the start and at the end; sensitization of employers and access to certification.

So far, 13 trainees have finished the training course of 800 hours. Four have gone on to win employment contracts while the others have gone on to study for a scholarship certificate. The training experience has led to a growth in the self-confidence, self-esteem and confidence of the trainees, with greater interest in learning. Quotations from participations:

*It had been many years since I had last lifted a pen.*

*I feel more prepared, with more determination.*

*I have more self-confidence, am more confident in my appearance and enjoy living.*

*Before, I didn’t know how to switch on a computer or surf the net.*

*Now I know how to do a CV.*

*Before, my mother solved all my problems, now I can myself.*

> EAPN Portugal: [www.eapn.pt](http://www.eapn.pt)/

**Other pathway approaches to social inclusion and employment with personalized support**

Open Youth Work, Dornbirn, has developed two projects to help to qualify young people. It is called ‘open youth work’ or outreach work because it operates on the principles and practices of voluntary participation, few requirements for participation (‘low threshold access’) and the idea of a second and even third chance for drop-outs. Participants are recruited to one or other project by street workers, for example at city meeting points, concerts and workshops. They are not contacted through schools, where many may have had bad experiences, nor through the employment office, where they may not have registered.

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| **Open Youth Work, Dornbirn, Austria: Alb@tros and *Job Ahoi***The aim of the Alb@tros programme is to enable participants to obtain the secondary general school certificate. Students may join at any time during the year - it is a modularized course - and participate in classes or through the internet. At the point of interview, there is an assessment, the student sets out a personal curriculum and there is a binding, signed contract between teacher and student. The targets, speed and pace are very much set by the student and there is a subsequent interview to discuss progress. Other courses are offered if the student falls behind. In the event of problems, personal counseling is offered. Workshops and study trips are included in the course. The teachers must be qualified. Open Youth Work operates extensively through social organizations such as Caritas. There are 14 tests and a final exam in the School for Social Education, Schlins and the student emerges with a full certificate. *Job Ahoi* is a workshop in Dornbirn for young people to renovate classy wooden boats, making them seaworthy again under the guidance of qualified boat builders, while a sewing room makes handbags, seats and other designer products. Young people coming to the project are interviewed about their career and future, objectives, while also dealing with issues such as housing, social security, money, legal issues and possible drug misuse. The project provides 15hr a week part-time employment and participants keep their allowances, health insurance and social security. Lateness or unreliability will lead to a pay cut. The project provides counseling, coaching and support with job applications. After the course, they are registered at the employment office with a view to a job or apprenticeship.Between them the two projects enable young people to learn, to keep appointments and agreements, to be punctual and trustworthy, how to cope with authority and deal with critical moments such as exams and interviews. They develop self-responsibility, personality, as well as social and professional competence. In *Job Ahoi*, they learn practical skills and craftsmanship. > Further information: [www.ojad.at](http://www.ojad.at).> EAPN Austria: **:** [www.armutskonferenz.at](http://www.armutskonferenz.at/) |

Here, four examples are given of projects that took an integrated, multidimensional approach to reaching specific excluded groups. First, the ERfA project in Graz, Austria, showed the value of a combination of low-threshold entry, a structured approach, accompanying services and multiplicity of workplaces, as well as linking the labour market to biodiversity. A combination of social economy and the environment is evident in the second, *Clair et net* in Belgium. The Malta project illustrated the importance of starting from basics and using the new technologies to make the learning experience an enjoyable one when aiming to reach those with almost no literacy skills,. The project in Cieszyn, Poland is an example of the potential of social economy projects to contribute to the socio-professional integration of marginalized groups.

**ERfA, Graz, Austria**

ERfA is a non-governmental organization in Graz, Austria which helps a broad range of marginal groups back into the labour market. ERfA stands for Erfahrung für Alle, or ‘experience for everyone’, and targets people on minimum income, long-term unemployed, immigrants, people who are dependent on drugs, ex- offenders, people in debt and those with poor health. Funded by the ESF, ERfA offers work in looking after municipal parks and woodlands, work and repair shops, administrative work, libraries, archives, construction and interior work, disability parking spacescleaning services and helping people move house. Work in the city’s 600ha of forests and parks includes repairing roads, looking after river banks and promoting biodiversity (e.g. plants, bee hives, nest boxes for birds). ERfA is based on progression: helping people move from the informal economy to the second labour market (temporary full-time work) to the main labour market (permanent full-time work), assisting them with social workers, case management, counseling and on-the-job training. There are stages of recruitment, guidance, stabilization, consolidation, out-placement and re-integration and the programme attempts to promote self-confidence, professional goals and communication skills in the participants. Entry into the programme is non-bureaucratic, with a low threshold of requirements. ERfA has 38 staff, 240 beneficiaries and 20% of participants reach the first labour market.

> Further information: [www.erfa-graz.at](http://www.erfa-graz.at)

> EAPN Austria**:** [www.armutskonferenz.at](http://www.armutskonferenz.at/)

***Clair et net*, Melreux-Hotton, Wallonia, Belgium**

*Clair et net* is a non-governmental organization (2008) working with those living in the most extreme poverty in rural Wallonia in Belgium, notably people who have long been without work, have met with accidents, are disabled, homeless or on their own, many living in caravan parks or camping sites. *Clair et net* developed an ESF-funded programme for social integration which comprises:

* A *Citizen-Service* public space for laundry, computer and internet access and the sale of second-hand furniture;
* *Learning area*: new information technologies, computer driver license, gardening, cooking;
* *Collective area*: meals together, shop, cultural activities;
* *Work placement*: laundry, garden, small restaurant business, second hand shop.

The main activities of the project revolve around the laundry, second-hand furniture restoration, organic garden, vegetable, orchard, clothes repair and cooking workshop. The project has a notable environmental orientation and natural cleaners are used rather than chemicals. The project is based on collective activity, an ethic of participation, people setting their own pace of development, a challenge to the result-orientated nature of some ESF programmes.

> Further information: <http://www.clairnet.be>/

> EAPN Belgium: <http://www.bapn.be/>

**Iċ-Ċavetta project for adult literacy, Malta**

The Iċ-Ċavetta project, Malta is a project to improve literacy skills for disadvantaged Maltese people aged 16 to 60. Funded under the ESF, with €3.66m, it is a project of the Jesuit-run Paulo Freire Institute, the Employment and Training Corporation, Inspire and the Richmond Foundation. The illiteracy rate in Malta has been sufficiently high to merit the attention of the Maltese government and programme materials for literacy were first developed over 2004-6. The Iċ-Ċavetta project helps over 100 people with literacy difficulties each year. The project’s main product is a toolkit designed to help both children and adults with literacy, starting with those who have almost no reading skills. It has a strong visual focus, using letter recognition both in traditional formats and interactively on computer in such a way as to be fun to use. The use of computers means that the learner is simultaneously developing computer skills. From this, participants will move on to further training and employment. The courses are designed to maximize social interaction, thereby enabling participants to develop both confidence and the social networks that will help them later to find work. Typical courses are 20hr over six sessions.

> Further information: <http://www.cavetta.org.mt/eng/index.php>

> APN Malta: [www.eapnmalta.org](http://www.eapnmalta.org)

***Creating workplaces* social enterprise, Cieszyn, Poland**

The *Creating workplaces for people in social exclusion* social enterprise was set up in Cieszyn in 2007 by the *Be together association for mutual assistance* which started in 1996 by providing a family resource centre, help for the victims of violence and services for the homeless. *Creating workplaces for people in social exclusion* was launched at a cost of €1.5m using the ESF, matched by state and local budgets. The social enterprise costs about €150,000 a year to run, but brings in business income of around €173,000 from the laundry, ironworks, joinery, sewing, catering and cleaning services and there is employment in sales, marketing, public relations and storage. 66 people now work there and each year, 900 people receive training and support, including 330 long-term unemployed, their main gains being in new skills and personal self-confidence.

> Further information: <http://www.ekonomiaspoleczna.pl/x/440108>

> EAPN Poland: [www.eapn.org.pl](http://www.eapn.org.pl)

**3.1. Reaching hard-to-reach/ disadvantaged groups of people**

Four examples are given of projects that reach people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, taken from Austria, Spain, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, working with. They reach out to marginalized young people, Roma e and people with disabilities.

**Spacelab, Vienna, Austria**

Spacelab is a project based in Vienna for marginalized young people (18 to 25) and adults. It provides an open space where participants can meet each other, contact trainers and discuss when they might join the project. The objective to Spacelab is to provide vocational and personal development, , help them draw up career plans, develop their skills and assist them to find employment. Spacelab provides modularized vocational training and paid experience in construction, renovation, gardening, woodwork, metalwork, media, office work, ecology and the arts. An important feature is that participants can proceed at their own pace, based on their circumstances, level of commitment and pace of learning. The total number of participants is 700 over two years - but about 6,000 are in need of such help in the city.

> Further information: [www.spacelab.cc](http://www.spacelab.cc)

> EAPN Austria: **:** [www.armutskonferenz.at](http://www.armutskonferenz.at/)

**Caritas Vocational Training Centre, San Lorenzo, Castellón, Spain**

The Vocational Training Centre of Caritas in San Lorenzo, Castellón, Spain, set up in 1993, provides workshops for young people who do not have qualifications, lack work experience, may have been rejected by existing services and have little personal or work-related support networks. They may also be at risk of social exclusion because of their background, social origin, being in care, poor mental health, mild disability, poverty, or family breakdown. The centre offers training in gardening and nursery work in the context of a course for social and labour market integration. Practical skills are accompanied by basic training, job search skills and the development of emotional and relationship skills. The course provides personal and social development, technological training and career guidance. So far, the outcomes have been an 80% completion rate, a 20% employment rate and the development by the project of routes into 30 organizations and businesses.

Key Good Practice Elements/Strengths or Learning Points:

The strengths of the project are in its method (‘you learn to work at work’), the link between training and personal development and the involvement of their families. The project is almost twenty years old and well established now, but success is very much a long-term process, the project being dependent on sufficient resources and qualified and committed staff.

> EAPN Spain: [www.eapn.es](http://www.eapn.es)

***Time to do it another way*, Czech Republic**

This is a two-year project aimed at increasing the number of Roma people in secondary school so as to improve their subsequent opportunities in the labour market. It provides counseling, educational, motivational, personal development and career guidance services for young Roma people aged 10 to 18 and their parents. An important aspect is working with parents to support them in helping their children through secondary school. The project operates in a number of settings: school itself, after-school and out-of-school (job clubs, computers, dance, drama, music, tutorials, drop in, health checks). Participants are encouraged to be active in determining activities for themselves, rather than being passive recipients and even implement some of the programmes themselves. So far, 1,300 people have participated, of whom 80% are Roma.

Of the 700 children who participated in the school guidance counseling, 80% subsequently enrolled in secondary school. However, the long-term results of these interventions, are dependent on the subsequent support provided to the participants elsewhere.

> Further information: [www.iqrs.cz](http://www.iqrs.cz).

> EAPN Czech Republic: [http://www.eapncr.org](http://www.eapncr.org/)

**Improving employment for people with disabilities, Vranov nad Topl’ou, Slovakia**

The Agency for Supported Employment in Vranov nad Topl’ou has a project for the integration of people with disabilities into the labour market, providing as much support to the participants as possible and developing a system for their subsequent employment. The project is targeted towards people with disabilities who are out of work and their family members; and towards organizations that might be able to find work for them, such as public services. The main services provided are: training, labour market analysis so as to identify vacancies, skills analysis, approaches to prospective employers, work placements, with individual support and a database of unemployed people and prospective employers. So far, a hundred people have benefitted from the project. It has led to a change in the status of people with disabilities, who are now identified as workers making a concrete contribution, ; it has led to an improvement in their quality of life.. The model has since been followed by the National Employment Agency.

**3.3. Promote NGO-driven delivery mechanisms**

Two projects demonstrated how global grants are the best means of ensuring that Structural Funds reach disadvantaged groups and shows the capacity of intermediary organizations such as FNARS in France and LVSTC to manage such grants. They are a reminder that massification is not the best way forward in the rolling out of Structural Funds: all FNARS projects were less than €23,000. Those Governments failing to use global grants ignore their benefits in delivery and management. Finally, the SAM project illustrated the value of transnationality and how it can drive up standards of social care. The SAM project highlighted how projects can assist groups that might be considered difficult to help, like people with poor mental health, but do so effectively.

**Global grant for micro-finance project, France**

FNARS (Fédération Nationale des Associations d’Accueil et de Réinsertion Sociale), the French organization addressing homelessness and disadvantage, managed, over 2000-6, a global grant for a micro-finance project in the central region of France around Orléans. FNARS won the contract to be the intermediary agency for the global grant under budget line 10b of the ESF programme in France, a line designed to assist local initiatives by non-profit organizations (it now called line 4.2.3). The budget line funds projects up to €23,000 (85% funded by the ESF) lasting up to 36 months for projects in the area of the social economy ( e.g. ecotourism), social inclusion (e.g. people on minimum income, young people, older people, people with disabilities) and combating discrimination, with priority given to isolated rural areas and urban areas in greatest difficulty. From 2005-8, FNARS used €3.4m to fund 135 projects which helped 3,273 people, mainly long-term unemployed, under 25s, the low paid and people on minimum income, mainly through professional training and the creation of economic activity and enterprises (180 jobs were created directly). With a budget of €1,070,837, some 65 projects helped 1,382 people over 2010-11. The programme made a big impact in sustaining the work of small non-governmental organizations and providing practical assistance to those in need.

> Further information: <http://www.fnars-centre.com/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=4>

and [www.fse.microprojets.fr](http://www.fse.microprojets.fr)

> EAPN France: [www.eapn-france.org](http://www.eapn-france.org)

**Global grants and technical assistance, London, England**

The ESF in London, England, operates a scheme of global grants called Community Grants (up to £12,000). Specific help to small groups is available under what is called the Small Groups Economic Inclusion Project, run by the London Voluntary Sector Training Consortium. Its experience, published as *Case studies*, shows that it is possible to provide a range of projects that help the most disadvantaged sections of the community, for example:

* Work with Turkish migrant women in London, especially those from broken and troubled marriages, helping them to improve their literacy, employability and job-finding skills;
* Provision of workshops for out-of -work community musicians, leading to self-employment in community music; the training of unemployed people in hand drumming, skills which they have in turn developed with other groups (e.g. ex-offenders and people with special needs);
* Advice, guidance, personal development and training for single women;
* Advice, advocacy and support to families in difficulty, homeless people and the victims of domestic violence;
* Courses in food hygiene, enabling participants to progress into restaurant employment;
* Provision of green skills for young disadvantaged people, including those unemployed, so that they may later become social entrepreneurs in developing the post-carbon economy;
* Skills, literacy, numeracy, information and sporting development for the francophone African community, with measures to improve mental health and combat anti-social behavior.

These courses, programmes and projects illustrate the way in which the ESF can, through the use of global grants, reach out to the most disadvantaged communities in imaginative and successful ways. Many of the projects record high subsequent progression rates into further education and employment. A critical part of the success of the ESF in London is the use of technical assistance by the London Voluntary Sector Training Consortium (LVSTC), which has accessed technical assistance since 1993 under §46 of the regulation. LVSTC has used technical assistance to work with over 4,000 street level groups to ensure that they are familiar with the ESF, assisted them in their funding applications, sort out subsequent problems and issues arising, ensured that the spirit of the partnership principle outlined in the Structural Funds’ Regulations.

> Further information: [www.lvstc.org.uk](http://www.lvstc.org)

**3.4. Put people experiencing poverty at the center**

**One of the main aspect where NGOs can have a great potential to get funding to run bottom-up/ participative projects**

**3.5 Invest in transnational activities**

The transnational ESF-funded project below shows the importance of getting engaged in transnational activities to foster innovative and participative social inclusion practices.

**Improving mental health, England and Denmark**

EAPN’s research found that transnational activity across the ESF over 2007-2013 has been limited compared to the 2000-6 period when the EQUAL programme operated. But there are some examples of good practice. Under the Social Activation Model (SAM) project of Community Service Volunteers in Ipswich, eastern England, people recovering from mental illness are assisted back into the mainstream community. They are assisted to develop their digital media skills in the areas of photography, graphics, web design, TV, film and radio with a view to developing a social enterprise in a disused shop. The project is characterized by the involvement of participants in the decision-making of the project, the development of personal skills and a flexible approach to progression. SAM has developed as a transnational project with partners in Denmark, with an international workshop held in 2010 under the aegis of the Active Inclusion Network under the ESF *Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming* strand. This examined the degree to which the SAM experience was transferable to other countries, especially the concepts of empowerment and the use of the community setting; the problems experienced by the project (e.g. relapse by participants, inadequate health support services), the critical success factors (e.g. finance, vision, flexibility, use of independent evaluator) - all important points of reflection that can drive up the standards of social care across Europe.

**4 Conclusions**

The examples given in chapter 3 demonstrate the importance and value of social inclusion NGOs running projects under Structural Funds. Even still, there are some important gaps in operations.

What more can be done?

First, few projects have been developed in the area of health, one of the most important issues for disadvantaged groups in at least some countries. Second, the use of funding from the European Regional Development Fund is not readily apparent: for years, EAPN has argued that the ESF and ERDF must go hand in hand, with the ERDF building the necessarily social infrastructure. Third, we know little about how projects intend to bring the lessons and issues arising into the heart of their political, governmental and administrative systems, an essential part of the partnership process of the Funds.

These 15 examples show the crucial role Social Inclusion NGOs can play in delivering effective projects to reduce poverty and social exclusion, and raise the important question: *why are there not more?* Over the years, EAPN has drawn attention to the difficulties that social inclusion NGOs experience in trying to access Structural Funds. These include poor information, the small proportion of funds and measures open to NGOs, the lack of open calls for projects, restrictive requirements for co-financing, demands for projects on an inappropriately large scale, the lack of assistance in preparing proposals and the sometimes restricted scope of operations permitted Even if successful, there is a range of disincentives to further participation in programmes, such as problems with cash flow and co-financing, the excessive volume of inappropriate reporting, financial restrictions and delays. These difficulties have been brought to the attention of both the European and national managing authorities for many years now. EAPN has repeatedly drawn attention to the need to reduce these barriers through such mechanisms as technical assistance, global grants, capacity-building and the use of intermediary bodies. Even small changes, such as ensuring that volunteer time be taken into account in match funding, could make a big difference. If these issues were to be successfully addressed, then the level of participation by social inclusion NGOs could be much higher - and the impact on poverty and social exclusion much greater.

1. According to three indicators used in the Europe 2020 strategy: at risk of poverty, severe material deprivation and low work intensity. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Eurostat: *Income and living conditions in Europe*. Luxembourg, author, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Council of Ministers has decided on a new approach to govern its over-riding policy priorities for the years up to 2020, called the *Europe 2020 Strategy*, designed to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The strategy set 5 concrete targets to:

	* Lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020;
	* Raise participation in employment from 69% to 75%;
	* Reduce the level of early school leaving from 15% to 10%, and raise participation in secondary level from 31% to 40%;
	* Reduce gas emissions by 20%, reduce energy consumption by 20% and increase efficiency by 20% (called the 20-20-20 formula);
	* Increase investment in research and development in each Members State to 3% of GDP. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. FEAD is the successor of the Food Aid Programme. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)