

*Semester Alliance Capacity Building Session
20 September 2016*



***Engaging in the European Semester with
national members***

Lessons Learnt

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Outline

- **Introducing EAPN**
- **Method of engagement with national members**
- **Impact at EU and national level**
- **Challenges and benefits for Members**
- **Final thoughts..**

Introducing EAPN



- ❑ Independent **Network of NGOs** committed to fight against poverty and social exclusion
- ❑ Started in 1990 – **key actor in EU processes – OMC, Lisbon** and now **Europe 2020/Semester**
- ❑ Receives **financial support** from the European Commission (PROGRESS/now EaSi)
- ❑ **31 National Networks** and **16 European NGOs** as members (6000+ organisations)
- ❑ **Participation of people** with direct experience of poverty must be part of the solution.

Introducing EAPN – Strategy for engaging in European Semester



- Europe 2020 targets will only be taken on board in the Semester if pressure is brought to bear at national level**
- Create a common project: engage national members in MS dialogue process: monitoring, evaluation, recommendations**
- Target national governments and EU Commission representations – ie European Semester Officers.**
- Promote cross-EU exchange and review presenting joint EU assessment and recommendations.**
- Joint Advocacy and Communication in Alliances at national and EU level – eg European Semester Alliance,**

Introducing EAPN – Actions in European Semester



EU Level

- 3 Meetings a year with 31 national members and EO's*
- Exchange and common assessment of country reports and proposals on CSRs, NRPs and Proposals for AGS – key reports/ position papers/letters*
- Advocacy meetings with COM/EP with high profile policy conference with members eg EESC/EP*

National Level

- Capacity building of members with updated Tool Kit and workshop*
- Prepare inputs to National Reform Programmes and on-going dialogue.*
- Review the NRPs for gaps and highlight their Recommendations for CSRs to Government and the Commission.*
- Review the CSRs, and make own statements.*
- Provide inputs to the Country Reports.*

Europe 2020 in the Semester

What impact? EU level



- **Following lobbying pressure: 2013 – poverty given specific focus in CSRs and monitoring report: 2013 (9), 2014 (12)**
- **2016 with reduced CSRs, incr in Pov CSRs - 2015 (6), and 2016 (11)**
- **Some positive CSRs, (MI, Services/Strategy) but general problems of lack of consistency and coherence between and within the CSRs**
- **NRPs have now specific section reporting on poverty target, with social scoreboard and SP Performance Monitor updated yearly.**
- **Guidance to MS on active participation of stakeholders.**
- **Invitation to new ECFIN dialogues with CS - 6 EAPN members.**
- **.High level dialogue with ECFIN, EP, Dombrovski's cabinet/DG EMPL**

Europe 2020 in the Semester

What impact – national level



- **12 national networks involved to some degree but 69% say their input is still not taken seriously enough.**
- **Some success in getting proposals into NRPs and structured partnerships (BE, DE, ES, FR, IE, PT, PL, SE) or into annex (SE and FR).**
- **Some say worse this year (BE, FI, IE, LU), some better (FR, NL, PL, RO, ES).**
- **Some success in CSRs on concrete areas – eg adequacy of minimum income, (BG, LV) access to universal social protection and health services, child poverty, (IE) in-work poverty (PL) integrated strategy (ES, PT) but lack coherence/undermined by macro CSRs.**
- **Working with the European Semester Officers is key (IE, DK, BG, ES, PT, PL, SK, LV)**
- **Best success when work in alliances at national level and combine it with other campaigning work (eg IE, PL and ES)**

Europe 2020 and the European Semester

What learning? Benefits



- **National engagement is crucial to drive more accountability and better policies EU/national**
- **EU in crisis is desperate to be seen to connect with citizens..**
- **Members who engage, get higher profile, become ‘EU’ Experts and can help their partnership status with govts etc**
- **Can influence NRP, CSRs and get key concerns taken on board or annexed to NRP (SE, FR) – impact on national policy and processes is crucial.**
- **Creates a joint advocacy project with members and validates EAPN as a « real » actor**

Europe 2020 and the European Semester

Some positive examples



- **Netherlands:** engaged in consultation meetings for 1st time, and consulted 1st with members, so got more momentum and interest.
- **Poland:** engage in official body for stakeholder involvement in NRP since 2012, with annual meeting on poverty. Send opinions and amendments to Country report/ Draft NRP, get answers explaining what was accepted or amended. Got some amendments in NRP text. CSR in-work poverty in 2014.
- **Spain:** Active partnership with Govt quoted in NRP. EAPN lead in 3rd Sector Platform. Get inputs textually into NRP. Make position papers to CSR/Country report/NRP, invited by Govt. Have face to face meetings, get the draft NRP to comment. Write their NRP assessment as a position paper and disseminate widely. Got MI CSR.
- **Sweden:** Slight improvement – more positive reaction to NGO input with more dialogue., but still too short and limited. Contributed to the NRP Annex
- **Ireland:** Makes submissions as EAPN and Better Europe Alliance, with regular meetings with Govt, and EP and externals. Also social inclusion forum and National Economic dialogue. Regular meetings with ESO.

Europe 2020 and the European Semester

What learning? Challenges for national members



- **Difficulty of getting up to speed with the process and learning to become effective**
- **Large expenditure of time and resources for uncertain results..**
- **Concerns about being co-opted/manipulated to justify EU/MS reputation on civil dialogue**
- **Concerns of unequal treatment compared to Social Partners**
- **Low quality consultation processes which don't aim for real policy impact from stakeholders..**

Europe 2020 and the European Semester

Where we are now!



- **Continue to engage with members in Semester, but continually reviewed – aim to get more independent funds**
- **Try to make engagement less onerous/more effective**
- **Focus on national level, getting impact on national as well as EU policy.**
- **Get members involved in high level EU meetings together – see impact and motivates them**
- **Capacity building based on mutual learning – the most effective – ie learning from each other and ‘competing’ for better results..**

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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!

Thank you!

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