

# The NAPInclusion Social Inclusion Forum

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This Peer Review on the SIF Irish experience can inform us on a practice relevant for the social inclusion OMC. Reading the report, we learnt a lot about the background, organisation, method and prospects of this experience. We have noted positive aspects, some questions on points to clarify, and we made a parallel with the French experience and considered what could be transferable from the Irish SIF.

## 1. Positive aspects

- There is a strong commitment of the *national authorities* in the organisation of the SIF which has a strong link with the NAP's social inclusion drawing (A Cabinet Committee oversees the NAP and is supported by an inter-departmental Senior Officials Group).
- The SIF is undertaken and organised by the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI), the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) and the Combat Poverty Agency. This important gathering of *central administrative authorities* allows better information on the SIF and involvement of all relevant actors in the fight against poverty. We also note that the SIF has a *formal setting* with the Minister of social affairs' participation, opening by the chair of NESF, and is held in one of Dublin's largest conference venues. This formal aspect reinforces the value given to the participants' views and propositions, as well as appointing a rapporteur and publishing the report of each SIF.
- The Lisbon Strategy recommended developing *governance* in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NAP's. Following this recommendation, the SIF is a good practice of national governance because it gives an opportunity to hear about the NAP inclusion process and progress.
- The role of *Local authorities* has been underlined as potential partners in the Social Inclusion process and they are involved in the SIF.
- *National NGOs, Community and Voluntary Pillar* are considered as social partners, and involved in the SIF. But more than that, grass roots professionals and people experiencing poverty participate in the SIF. A large number of representative groups (older people, lone parents, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities...) take part to have a say in policies and provisions that have direct impact on their lives.
- The *methodology* for preparing the SIF seems efficient, with many gatherings organised at local and regional levels to increase organisations' and individuals' capacity to participate actively in the SIF. It brought people either experiencing poverty or working with groups experiencing poverty to discuss on global and multidimensional issues related to poverty to be raised in the SIF.

## 2. Points to clarify

- How are the stakeholders to the SIF selected in order to have a representative participation of all target groups? By whom? Do people experiencing poverty speak for themselves or are they represented by NGOs?
- What approach and methodology is used in the SIF (or during its local preparations) to make people experiencing different kinds of poverty situations to debate together on *cross-cutting themes*? What impact has this approach on the implementation of the NAP inclusion?
- How many persons participated to each of the previous forums? What part of persons experiencing poverty among them? Is there an evolution of those numbers?
- Is the NAP inclusion report easily understandable by all people involved in those meetings? If not, is it re-written or adapted? If so, by whom?
- Does the SIF increase the empowerment of people experiencing poverty and other stakeholders? Do the senior policy-makers adopt propositions and focuses expressed in the SIF to feed the next NAP inclusion?
- Do the Irish authorities intend to evaluate the qualitative contents and success of the SIF by independent experts?
- Does the SIF give an opportunity to evaluate the NAP Inclusion?
- Did the 6 regional seminars cover all the Irish regions? If not, was it an experimental step? On which criteria were those regions chosen?
- Did those regional seminars give a pattern of gatherings that helped to build and to feed the national SIF? Will they be re-conducted?
- Is there a law in Ireland which places the individual at the centre of the policy development and delivery? Does it explain the commitment of the Irish government to consult with people experiencing poverty and the organisations which represent them? What is the application field of this law?

## 3. The French experience

In France, some practices are partly similar to the Irish experience of national governance and of the SIF.

- At a national level, we have a consultative institution called CNLE (National Council of politics to combat poverty and social exclusion). It is involved in the drawing and assessment of the NAP inclusion guidelines. The CNLE is composed of 54 members, representing 7 groups: central administration, members of parliament and local authorities, NGOs, trade unions, social organisms, national councils, experts. Trade unions and

NGOs in particular represent people experiencing poverty but those people are not directly members of the CNLE.

- National networks are consulted by the DGAS (office of social inclusion) on the process of NAP implementation and monitoring. But, at the moment, this implementation does not involve directly people experiencing poverty or exclusion nor grass-roots associations.
- On the other side, the DGAS experiences local forums through an experience of improving the access of people to their social rights (PARADS networks). These forums allow people to express their views and difficulties but it is not intended to contribute to the NAP inclusion.
- Like in Ireland there is a Cabinet Committee on social inclusion (CILE). It is chaired by the Prime minister and holds his meetings each two years. It defines measures to combat poverty and social exclusion which are guidelines for programming the 2 years actions of each state department. It is supported by an inter-departmental Senior Officials Group (CP CILE) who has quarterly meetings, is in charge of monitoring those measures and ratifies the progress of the NAP inclusion.
- Since 2004, a National Conference to prevent and fight exclusions (CNPLE) is organised to gather local authorities, NGOs and professionals engaged in this field. It was held again in 2006. Prior to it, 5 regional conferences were held and their conclusions fed the national conference.
- The French government takes into account all those events and working groups to implement new measures and targets when he prepares the NAP's actualisation.
- On the other hand, experiences on national social politics are led in the mark of projects co financed by the European Commission (e.g.: PROGRESS). The French project "Regards croisés sur les politiques d'inclusion sociale" is an example of these experiences. The project is led by Salvation Army with the DGAS, EAPN and UNIOPSS (social NGO network) partnership. The aim is to draw a critical interpretation of the French NAP inclusion by organising in 3 regions workshops (regional seminars) with people experiencing poverty and associations who work with them. Review, analysis and propositions are made by these workshops and are gathered on a website: [www.inclusion-sociale.org](http://www.inclusion-sociale.org). These propositions will be presented to elected people representatives and central authorities in order everybody take in account, accept and mobilise people experiencing poverty and participation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NAP inclusion. This project aims to develop this method and to compare it with other European countries (Belgium, Lithuania and Greece) in order to learn together.
- Finally, EAPN-France is also active on the participation's field, in partnership with social NGO's networks. During the French Presidency (2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2008), a national forum of people experiencing poverty will be led by these associative networks. It already exists in the Champagne-Ardenne region (for 3 years).

## 4. Transferability

- We think the practice presented and analysed during this Peer Review, the Irish SIF (Social Inclusion Forum) is a good practice that could be transferred to France. On one hand, there is a strong political will from the DGAS, and the CNLE commitment is a prerequisite to a similar SIF, but some steps must be respected:
- It is absolutely necessary to associate people experiencing poverty as experts to the CNLE working group on the monitoring of the NAP inclusion.
- It is also necessary to associate people experiencing poverty to the works of the National Observatory on Poverty and Social Exclusion (ONPES).
- We need to set up a legislation which focuses on people experiencing poverty, such as the rights established by the 2002-2 Law modernising social and medico-social action which places the user of the social and medico-social institutions and services at the centre of the system.
- To prepare the organisation of a French SIF, we need to set up a multi-sector network, gathering national and local level, NGO and public authorities. Its purpose would be to involve administration, elected people representatives, social partners, NGOs and people experiencing poverty all together for a cross-cut fight against poverty.
- Practically, experimental regional fora and a national one should be set up every two years before elaborating the NAP. We propose that the CNLE NAP working group gives the impulse to that network and initiates the creation of the french SIF.