

## The NAPInclusion Social Inclusion Forum

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### 1. Introduction: the Spanish Participation Structure

In order to understand the present report, it is necessary to give first some hints about the organisation of public services. Spain is a highly decentralised country in which many policies are decentralised in the so-called Autonomous Communities (regions). In particular, most of the policies addressed by the National Plan for Social Inclusion (NPSI) - education, health, minimum income, housing, social services, active employment policies...- are *exclusively* in the hands of the Autonomous Communities, being the role of the State in most cases that of establishing minimum levels in the provision of services and of coordination. In the case of the NPSI, the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (MTAS) acts as the leader and coordinator.

In this context, it is worth to mention briefly the coordination /information mechanisms between all agents involved in the design, monitoring and evaluation of the Spanish NPSI:

- **The Special Commission for the NPSI**, composed of the General Directors of Social Services or similar of the 17 Autonomous Communities and the two Autonomous Cities (Ceuta and Melilla) (AACC in the rest of the document); the local level represented by one member of the Spanish Federation of Provinces and Municipalities (FEMP); and one representative of each of the ministries involved in the design and implementation of the NPSI. As said above, the MTAS acts as the leader and coordinator.
- **The State Council of NGOs in the field of social action**, representing the civil society, and dependant of the MTAS. There is a working group, -in which the National Institute for Employment (INEM) participates-, on issues related specifically to social inclusion. It is consulted during the first drafts of the NPSI and translates the views of the sector. To do so, they send a questionnaire to as much NGOs as possible, with the objective of evaluating the current NPSI and collect opinions and suggestions for the next one.
- **The Sectoral Conference for Social Affairs**, as the political arm of the Special Commission for the NPSI, composed of the regional councillors (sort of regional ministers) of social affairs of all AACC. It approves the NPSI before it goes to its final approval by the State Ministers Council.
- **Forum for technical cooperation** with AACC and the local level, through the FEMP, in issues related to social inclusion, minimum income and specific studies /reports on social inclusion issues.

- **Consultations** to Social Partners (Trade Unions and Employers' Associations), political groups in the national Parliament and people experiencing social exclusion, through their representatives, the NGOs. **The Economic and Social Council**, composed of Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, produces a consultative report on the NPSI.

In its role as leader and coordinator of the NPSI, the MTAS celebrates bilateral meetings with all ministries involved. In the framework described of decentralisation of competences, decentralisation of the participation processes also occurs, since most of the AACC count on their own Regional Plans for Social Inclusion. Indeed, most AACC count also on their own participation/communication structures in which the local level and the regional NGOs participate.

### 1.1 Assessment of the relevance of the SIF to Spain; problems it could solve

The two main elements of the Spanish structure for participation/coordination/information (the Special Commission and the State Council of NGOs) do not count on a structured/institutionalised common place. An instrument like the SIF could gather them and improve communication among all actors (regions, municipalities, various ministries, NGOs), particularly the relationship between NGOs and the rest of ministries involved.

In the context of decentralisation, communication/coordination between the three strands of the public administration -central, regional, local (more than 8000 municipalities in Spain)- is essential and could also be improved. Particularly, the one between regional and local actors, since the regions concentrate most of the competences and resources in the field of social inclusion policies but the local level is where measures are provided at best.

### 1.2 Similarities / differences of the SIF with the Spanish structure

As stated above, Spain does not count on a place for ALL actors involved, as the SIF proposes. However, the decentralisation of the Spanish administration makes it easier for regional governments to coordinate/promote participation of all agents in their respective territories.

Although the Spanish Social Dialogue has been and is considered as a good practice in the promotion of reforms in the labour market and, to a lesser extent, in social inclusion issues, it does not count, as the Irish system does, with the NGOs. Communication with or participation of Social Partners in the NPSI is not as intensive in Spain as it seems to be in Ireland.

Spanish Government promotes actively and strongly the participation of NGOs in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NPSI, recognizing their closer relationship with persons facing processes of social inclusion and their better knowledge on how to act. Direct participation of people experiencing social exclusion is more limited than in Ireland, though the Ministry supports the annual celebration of a Seminar of the EAPN, similar to the Annual European Meeting of EAPN.

### 1.3 Potential transferability

There are no legislative or normative obstacles to the transfer of such a mechanism to Spain.

It could be an interesting practice, that, again in the context of decentralisation, would have to be agreed upon with the AACC, the entities competent for it. In fact, it is possible that a structure like the SIF could be more effective if organised at territorial level. All AACC would establish such a structure, reaching better all potential participants, and possibly treating the issues more deeply than if established only at state level. Then, a National SIF would gather representatives of all regional SIFs.

It is important to note that the "level" of the discussions/participation would possibly be different at regional and at national level. Whereas the regional SIFs would deal rather with "micro" approaches of the social inclusion issues, the participation in the national SIF would have a marked strategic approach.

### 1.4 Ways to measure the results / impact of the SIF

It could be thought of evaluation forms among all participants in the SIF in order to collect their opinion on whether the SIF increases their chances of effective participation. One could also think of in depth interviews (qualitative investigation) with representatives of all agents aiming to determine not only whether participation is improved through the SIF, but also whether and how does the SIF affect social inclusion policies (does participation improve the results of the policies? how?). The general population could also be subject of consultation, through surveys to representative samples aiming to test whether the SIF improves also the knowledge on these issues and to catch the common opinion about social inclusion policies, the NPSI, the actors...

However, being the final objective of these initiatives the reduction of poverty levels and social exclusion, the very effect to measure is how much the SIF improves policies / measures, so that poverty levels and social exclusion are reduced (how many measures have been improved thanks to the SIF?).

### 1.5 A note on questions related being raised and debated in Spain

The Luis Vives Foundation and EAPN, together with the MTAS, are executing at present (October-December 07) a programme co-financed by the European Commission. It aims to celebrate territorial workshops (in 13 Autonomous Communities) called "For the Social inclusion: awareness, mobilisation and debate", plus a final seminar. The objective is to promote debate on the European Strategy for Social inclusion and protection and participation in social inclusion issues of all agents, particularly of the NGOs. Interesting issues are surely coming out soon.

Meanwhile, there is a deep debate on how to provide, within the framework of a departmentalised public administration, the multidimensional and integrated attention that the social exclusion needs. The difficulties in guaranteeing the interdepartmental coordination seem to be the key point.

## 1.6 Contribution of such a policy to the objectives and strategy of the NPSI

An instrument like the SIF would directly improve one of the main objectives of the NPSI, which is better governance. Therefore, it would lead to increased and better participation /coordination / and information. In so doing, it should contribute to all objectives of the NPSI, particularly in aspects that require improved coordination to offer better integrated services.

## 1.7 Key issues and main questions proposed for the debate at the review meeting

- How could the interest of Autonomous Communities and local entities in participating in such a scheme be raised without a financial instrument? What other mechanisms has the SIF made use of in order to raise the interest of potential participants?
- What problems have been faced in establishing such an instrument?
- Who pays all the costs originated? How much does it cost?
- What kind of normative / regulation was needed at the time of setting up the SIF?
- How does the SIF include regional and local agents? Are there differences in the commitment of regions/municipalities if the political party governing the region/municipality differs from the governing party at state level? How does the SIF deal with these differences, if any?
- Is the SIF effective in reinforcing involvement of all ministries concerned by social inclusion issues?
- How does the SIF deal with "interdepartmental" coordination issues? Multidimensional or bilateral workshops?
- Is such an instrument able to adapt to all levels of discussion without being superficial? How could this risk be addressed?
- Has Ireland discussed its National Plan for Social Inclusion in the Parliament? How?