

EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR A
DEMOCRATIC
SOCIAL EUROPEAN SEMESTER
SUSTAINABLE

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP REPORT



**A DYNAMIC AND POWERFUL DAY FOR
LEARNING, EXCHANGE AND ENGAGEMENT**

BRUSSELS, 6 JUNE 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 6th June, the European Alliance for a Democratic, Social and Sustainable European semester held a 1-day Capacity Building workshop for 35 Alliance members in Brussels. The workshop was primarily aimed at national members of the Alliance, including the 3 pilot alliances in Bulgaria, Denmark and Ireland, but also at representatives from Brussels-based Alliance members.

The workshop was meant to strengthen members' knowledge of Europe 2020 and the European Semester, increasing the effectiveness of their engagement, boosting their capacity to build effective alliances cross-sectorally, particularly at the national level, and improving the involvement and ownership of the Semester Alliance.

The day was highly interactive, involving presentations and discussions, with inputs from the European Commission, as well as practical workshops, featuring exchanges, group exercises, and learning on national engagement and cross-sectoral working.

RATIONALE

The European Alliance for a Democratic, Social and Sustainable European Semester is a broad coalition bringing together 16 major European civil society organisations and trade unions, representing thousands of member organisations at the European, national and local levels. The Alliance aims to support progress towards a more democratic, social, and sustainable Europe 2020 Strategy, through strengthening civil dialogue engagement in the European Semester at national and EU levels. This capacity building workshop has been planned as part of the Alliance work programme to support its national and European members to engage more effectively and work together in the European Semester process.

GOAL

To deepen the knowledge of the European Semester and strengthen the capacity of working together, using the Semester Alliance work to better support initiatives and activities at the national level.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the workshop were to promote exchange and learning between national and European Alliance members, in order to:

- Strengthen the knowledge of the Europe 2020 and the European Semester process, and increase the effectiveness of engagement
- Increase the capacity to build effective alliances cross-sectorally, particularly at national level
- Increase the involvement and ownership in the Semester Alliance.

PROGRAMME

The day started with an opening session, introducing the day's activities and participants, and assessing expectations of those present. A plenary session followed, providing the basics on the Semester process, Europe 2020 and opportunities for stakeholder engagement. 2 parallel group workshop sessions took place. The first set of working groups took place in the morning and focused on learning lessons from national engagement, building effective actions. The second set took place in the afternoon and focused on how we work effectively in cross-sectoral alliances, building cross-sectoral positions. A review/discussion of learning points and about the role the Semester Alliance can play followed. A final evaluation closed the day.

9.00 – 9.30	<p style="text-align: center;">Welcome and Introduction</p> <p><i>The opening session will introduce the day's activities and participants to each other, sharing expectations.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening: Barbara Helfferich, Chair of the Semester Alliance (EAPN) • Introduction and get to know you activity: Sian Jones, Project Coordinator (EAPN)
Block 1: Europe 2020 and the European Semester – in a nutshell	
9.30 – 10.45	<p>Introducing the basic elements of the Semester: What is it? How does it work? Why is it important? How can NGOs and other organizations have an impact?</p> <p><i>This plenary session will present the basics about the European Semester and Europe 2020 and how stakeholders can engage, with inputs from the Alliance and the Commission, followed by questions/discussion.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing the European Semester, presenting the key elements of the Semester Toolkit: Amana Ferro, Senior Policy Officer (EAPN) • The Semester Alliance actions and role of national level: Sian Jones, Policy Coordinator (EAPN) • New developments on the Semester and how national organizations can best input: Maya Carr-Hill, Policy Officer, and Graeme Belshaw, Desk Officer, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion • Questions/Discussion from participants • Introduction to workshop activities am and pm: Sian Jones
10.45– 11.00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11.00 – 1.00	<p>How to engage better with the European Semester at the national level</p> <p><i>The group will be split into 3 parallel workshop sessions, with the same guidelines, to share experiences and learning points on national engagement, before developing practical ideas for improving engagement.</i></p> <p>Each Workshop will be divided into 2 parts:</p> <p>1) Learning points from current national action on European Semester and the role of EU level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Presentation of a national pilot alliance and another national experience, learning from current engagement in the Semester and future actions. • Discussion and agreement on Key Learning Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What works and doesn't work at national level? ○ What value-added do the Brussels-based EOs bring? <p>2) Group Task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on template of key European Semester milestones, develop at least 3 key actions (awareness-raising, input/responses, advocacy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Buzz groups preparation ○ Group discussion and finalizing flip chart presentation

1.00	Lunch
Block 2: How to work in Cross-Sectoral Alliances	
2.00 - 3.30	<p><i>The second block of 3 parallel workshop sessions will explore the challenges of cross-sectoral work through a simulation exercise.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Develop a group initial statement providing a cross-sectoral response to the CSRs, to be presented to the plenary session • What are benefits and challenges of working cross-sectorally? How to overcome these?
3.30 – 3.45	Coffee Break
3.45 - 5.30	<p>Moving forward as an Alliance</p> <p><i>The final session in plenary provides feedback, presentation of Action Plans and CSR statements, before assessing learning points and follow up with the Alliance.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning points from morning session and Action Plans • Presentation of CSR statements and comments on process • Discussion on learning points and challenges: What support can the EU Alliance give?

PARTICIPANTS:

There were 35 participants, 17 from the national level and 18 from Brussels.

National Pilot Alliances

Douhomiv Minev – EAPN Bulgaria

LyubenTomev – Confederation of Independent Trade Unions, Bulgaria

Oleg Chulev, Confederation of LabourPodkrepa, Bulgaria

Elena Triffonova, Women’s Lobby, Bulgaria

Per K. Larsen, EAPN Denmark

Randi Theil, Women’s Council, Denmark

Natalia Rogaczewska, Federation of Social Housing Organisations, Denmark

Paul Ginnell, EAPN Ireland

Joan O’Donnell, Disability Federation of Ireland

Michael Ewing, Environmental Pillar, Ireland

National members of Alliance partners

Harry Gschwindt, Belgian Federation of Food Banks, FEBA

Doros Polykarpou, KISA Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism, Cyprus, PICUM

Catrin Becher, National Council of German Women’s Organisations, Germany, EWL

AndrásLukács, Clean Air Action Group, Hungary, Green Budget Europe

John Dolan, Disability Federation of Ireland, EASPD

Gene Clayton, Irish Council for Social Housing, CECODHAS

VirginieToussain, Social Union for Housing, France, CECODHAS

European Organisations – Alliance partners

ArturBenedyktowicz, CARITAS Europa

Clotilde Clark-Foulquier, Eurodiaconia

KadriSoova, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants

Mary Collins, European Women’s Lobby

Sabrina Ferraina, European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities

Giulia Quarta, European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities
Alice Pittini, CEODHAS Housing Europe
Sarah King, European Trade Union Confederation
RékaTunyogi, Eurochild
Barbara Helfferich, European Anti-Poverty Network
Sian Jones, European Anti-Poverty Network
Amana Ferro, European Anti-Poverty Network
Tanya Basarab, European Anti-Poverty Network
Rebecca Lee, European Anti-Poverty Network
Nellie Epinat, European Anti-Poverty Network

External speakers

Maya Carr-Hill, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission
Graeme Bellshaw, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission
Cornelia Andrei, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

PARTICIPANTS' EXPECTATIONS FROM THE DAY

- Hear more from national members on how the Alliance can best support them
- Know more about working with the European Semester and how to concretely have access to this process and impact it
- Make sure that the Semester is a balanced process between social, environmental and economic issues
- Bring back a rights-based approach – measure equality and inequality, as economy needs to work for the well-being of all
- Look forward to practical exchanges about national experiences
- Learn more about how to work in alliance, how to build alliances at national level and how to bring stakeholders together to work better
- Learn how to better motivate and build the capacity of national members to engage with the Semester process
- Increase the participation in the debate of what Europe we want
- Hope to be able to provide some insight into the Semester process, and to hear more about the development of the national pilot alliances (Maya Carr-Hill, Policy Officer for DG Employment, European Commission).

BLOCK 1:

EUROPE 2020 AND THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER IN A NUTSHELL

PLENARY SESSION

The capacity building started with a plenary session, which presented the basics about the European Semester and Europe 2020, and how stakeholders can engage in the process. Sian Jones (Policy Coordinator for EAPN) and Amana Ferro (Senior Policy Officer for EAPN) gave precious inputs from the Alliance, while MayaCarr-Hill (Policy Officer for DG Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission) and Graeme Belshaw (Desk Officer for DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission) presented the Commission perspective, showing new developments on the Semester and how national organisations can best input.

Amana Ferro (Senior Policy Officer for EAPN): ***Introducing Europe 2020 and the European Semester***

The presentation introduced the policy framework of the European Semester, showing its main elements, paying particular attention to the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Stability and Growth Pact. The speaker stressed the importance of these key processes, that define the development framework for the European Union, as well as the importance of getting involved in to bring back social, environmental and equality objectives on the priority agenda, and to strengthen the democracy and legitimacy of the process. Finally, Ms Ferro briefly introduced the Semester Alliance Toolkit and its main contents

[Presentation](#)

Sian Jones (Policy Coordinator for EAPN): ***Introducing the EU Alliance***

The presentation showed the main features of the Semester Alliance, and gave more details on the three national pilots (Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland) and their work. A broad coalition of 16 major EU civil society organisations and trade unions, the Alliance aims to achieve progress on a more democratic, social and sustainable Europe 2020 Strategy and European Semester, to contribute to social and environmental/climate targets, and to improve the legitimacy of the process, Ms Jones said. The Alliance stands for social and sustainable macroeconomic policies, fighting poverty and social exclusion, quality employment, promoting inclusive education, promoting gender equality, investing in resource efficiency, and tackling climate change, as well as a more participative governance, she concluded.

[Presentation](#)

Maya Carr-Hill and Graeme Belshaw (Policy Officer / Desk Officer for DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission): ***Stakeholder engagement and The Europe 2020 Strategy. Social investment and the European Semester***

After a short introduction on the European Semester and its recent developments, the European Commission speakers stressed the importance of the involvement and participation of all key actors, to ensure ownership and facilitate progress on the implementation of Country Specific Recommendations, objectives, and targets. In many Member States, they said, the involvement of the different stakeholders in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy could still be improved. In this context, the role of the National Reform Programmes should be re-assessed, said the speakers. At European level, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have been particularly active, through close monitoring of the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, and through mobilising action in the Member States, including at regional and local levels, and reflecting the multi-level governance structure of the EU. Finally, the speakers underlined that the Commission has also reinforced its representations in the Member States, to enhance the quality of its engagement with authorities and stakeholders at national level. The presentation ends with important suggestions on how to enhance the stakeholder engagement in that process.

[Presentation](#)

DISCUSSION POINTS

- ***How do you work with other DGs on economic and social goals?***

We work with the DG Secretary General on all areas concerned for the different countries and with each DG, according to the area. This can be explained as a coordinate process. Bilateral meetings and video conferences are often used to follow up the national implementation of CSRs and to confront with the national authorities.

- ***How do you monitor the implementation of CSRs in Member States?***

After CSRs are published and adopted in July, there is a process of reviewing implementation involving both the Commission and the Member States. The Social Protection Committee also assesses implementation and issues conclusions that feed into the overall monitoring. There are different levels of engagement and compliance in Member States, but they have to react somehow within these committees. There are also bilateral meetings with the Governments, video conferences with local authorities and other national actors.

- ***What is the Staff Working Document accompanying the CSRs?***

It is the combined analysis on the situation in a country from different DGs, on different areas: economy, finance, inclusion, climate, etc. The Recommendations get all the attention, but a CSR is not issues if it's not grounded in the analysis in the Staff Working Document. Not all issues flagged up in the document make it into the formal CSRs, as it is a prioritizing exercise, but this doesn't mean that the issues re forgotten. Case studies very useful, and the document is a good place for civil society to try to input, with evidence-based input.

MORNING WORKSHOPS:

HOW TO ENGAGE BETTER WITH THE SEMESTER AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

After the plenary session, participants split into 3 parallel group work sessions, with the same guidelines, to share experiences and learning points on national engagement, before developing practical ideas for improving engagement. Each workshop was divided into 2 parts:

1. Learning points from current national action on European Semester and role of EU level

- Introduction
- Presentation of a national pilot alliance and another national experience, learning from current engagement in the Semester and future actions.
- Discussion and agreement on Key Learning Points:
 - What works and doesn't work at national level?
 - What value-added do the Brussels-based EOs bring?

2. Group Task

- Based on template of key Semester milestones develop at least 3 key actions (awareness-raising, inputs/responses, advocacy)
 - Buzz groups preparation
 - Group discussion and finalizing flip chart presentation

Workshop 1	Facilitator: Mary Collins (EWL) Rapporteur: Clotilde Clark-Foulquier (Eurodiaconia) Note Taker: Tanya Basarab (EAPN)	Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Per Larsen, Danish Pilot Alliance• Catrin Becher, EWL/Germany Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bulgarian and Irish Alliances, EASPD Ireland, Cecodhas France• Brussels EOs: EWL, FEANTSA, Eurodiaconia
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Per K. Larsen, Danish Pilot Alliance

The presentation described how the Alliance was established, and covered issues such as the search and selection of Alliance partners in Denmark, and how to make Europe 2020 and the Semester process accessible and understandable to actors at a national level. The speaker set out the national alliance proposed activities and also focused on the national alliance's first meeting and activities, as well as added value in the Danish society, and challenges it still faces.

Presentation

Catrin Becher, European Women's Lobby /Germany

The speaker explained that such a pilot alliance does not exist in Germany, but that the German Women's Lobby and its members work in different fields (political, social, education etc). The working methods are based on resolutions that member organisations decide, and no such resolution on the European Semester was adopted so far. However, the organization contributed to the European Women's Lobby input on the alternative Country Specific Recommendations, she continued. These urged decision-makers to take immediate measures to tackle precarious jobs and find a solution long-term. Other social and economic organisations participate in drafting the National Reform Programme, but often the gender perspective is missing. Ms Becher said that the EC representation in Berlin organizes information events on the Semester, which is a good starting point for those wishing to get more involved, and also to create more awareness and disseminate knowledge on the Semester. National pilot alliances, she concluded, are a very good tool to further engage organisations at the national level.

LEARNING POINTS:

- Existence of a mechanism around the European Semester is positive
- Pilot alliances provide an opportunity to share vision and common points
- Chance to translate a vision in simple terms and not get stuck in technicalities
- Chance to bring daily work into proposals
- Well recognized organisations joined the Danish pilot alliance quite easily
- Danish pilot has a loose structure and focusses more on content – it is time to move to a more structured approach
- Having (the right) contacts in Ministries is key
- More organisations are in the alliance, more people are represented
- EU-level alliances strengthen national ones
- European Organisations have the role to translate and transmit essential information and key messages, and to support and encourage engagement
- The pilot alliances have to be successful – that adds pressure.

ACTION PLAN:

- General agreement: need to ensure that the timing/input is useful to the Commission
- June: Governments themselves only have 36 hours to discuss, so CSR analysis need to happen quickly, accompanied by key messages and press release
- July: letter to the President of the Council, press release, public awareness campaign
- The analysis of staff working document accompanying the CSRs could be a good counter-argument- case studies
- October: analyze the national budget
- Communicate key messages before Spring Council
- Throughout the year, contact Ministries and build awareness
- Contact your national desk officer in Brussels, and the and European Semester Officer in the EC representation in your country
- Mapping of time and actors is crucial (adapt messages to the audience)
- Keep engaging with the process, even if progress is slow.

Workshop 2	Facilitator: Sian Jones (EAPN) Rapporteur: RékaTunyogi(Eurochild) Note Taker: Rebecca Lee (EAPN)	Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Ginnell, Irish Pilot Alliance • AndrásLukács, Green Budget Europe/Hungary Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danish and Bulgarian Alliances, FEBA Belgium • Brussels EOs: PICUM, Cecodhas, Eurochild, EASPD
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Paul Ginnell, Irish Pilot Alliance

The presentation highlighted the current development of the Irish Pilot Alliance, building on an existing Europe 2020 Working group which was coordinated by EAPN. New partners had joined – particularly the environmental pillar, more organizations from the community and voluntary pillar, and Social Justice Ireland, said Mr Ginnell. The speaker also reviewed the national alliance’s practices and activities, sharing the learning on Europe 2020 and the Semester, and upcoming events.

[Presentation](#)

András Lukács, Green Budget Europe / Hungary

The speaker explained that, since 2011, NGOs who disagree with the Government have received practically no public funding, and civil society representatives have been excluded from a number of bodies, where they had a seat earlier. There is fierce political discrimination against organisations and persons with other views than that of the government (including losing one's job), Mr Lukács continued. The voice of NGO’s mostly disappeared from the press, and, as far as the European Semester is concerned, practically nobody knows what it is, he said. Those NGO’s who know at least a little bit about it and might be even interested in dealing with it, are generally struggling for survival, and have no capacity to deal with it, he added. The speaker also indicated that the draft of the National Reform Programme is public, but even if NGOs make comments to it, there is no feedback from the Government, and input is generally not taken into account. The Government mostly fulfils those Country-Specific Recommendations which are legally binding (e.g., the Government budget’s deficit), but quite often does the opposite in the case of recommendations which are not legally binding, said the speaker. In the opinion of MrLukács, all Europe 2020 targets and major commitments (employment, education, environment etc.) by Member States, and should be treated as seriously as the Government budget deficit, i.e., their violation must have legal and financial consequences for the MS concerned. The targets should be much more detailed (with more indicators), said the speaker, adding that the aims and process of the European Semester should be regularly and widely explained to the public. The European Commission should provide the necessary financial means for such campaigns, Mr Lukács concluded, and the capacity of NGOs must be strengthened to make their meaningful participation possible.

[Presentation](#)

LEARNING POINTS:

- There are big differences between countries in how the European Semester is conducted
- Little trust in Government (HU/BG) and the process is making meaningful civil dialogue problematic
- The NRP is a report, not a plan – there's a problem of interaction when it's not forward-looking
- Limited impact
- Austerity overpowers any good messages,
- Timing and deadlines are difficult
- Lack of finances for civil society to engage
- Europe 2020 lacks attached sanctions
- No debate in national Parliaments
- The data collection is not comprehensive, nor comparative
- Need to engage with other actors than Governments: European Commission, independent experts, desk officers, European Semester Officers, MEPs
- Real need for cross-sectoral working, to get impact and more coherent proposals
- Priority to awareness-raising tools towards public
- Use voluntary and activists' support
- Raise awareness on stakeholder engagement
- European Organisations to alert national members in time (real moments of opportunity) and to do capacity building.

ACTION PLAN:

1. CSRs: The key moments are July (when they come out and are adopted) and January, when the Commission prepares the staff working document, even before the NRPs are published, as they assess the implementation and prepare for the next year CSRs. It's important to get in touch with Desk Officers, then send comments, reactions and proposals for changes to Commission and Governments, with a strong media presence as of July. The aim will be to get political will behind CSRs that are useful, and have suggestions for the ones we don't like.
2. AGS: Send messages around September, based on information on how the Semester is working (NRP and CSR) & case studies; not just to DG Employment, but also the Secretariat General, EP, Council, SPC, Perm Reps etc.
3. Have a year media action plan: awareness-raising campaign around CSRs after adoption & NRPs – how they corresponds to reality, and what the imbalance is (links to laws and things that interest people) – non achievement on the targets, the commitments and the reality.

Workshop 3	Facilitator: Amana Ferro (EAPN) Rapporteur: Sarah King (ETUC) Note Taker: Nellie Epinat (EAPN)	Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Douhomir Minev, Bulgarian Pilot Alliance • Natalia Rogaczewska, Cecodhas/Denmark Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danish and Irish Alliances, PICUM Cyprus, Cecodhas Ireland • Brussels EOs: EASPD, ETUC, Caritas
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Douhomir Minev, Bulgarian Pilot Alliance

The presenter highlighted that such a project was very needed in Bulgaria, and it was quickly recognized by all social partners. Bulgaria has been in a social economic crisis for many years, and gradually social actors have developed a more or less homogenous picture of social and economic policies, said Mr Minev. The first identified factor regards the procedures of how democracy works in practice, how policies are formulated, while the second factor was that there were expectations from the European Union to counter the disastrous direction in which the Bulgarian Government was going – instead, it explicitly supported it. Finally, there is a clear gap between policies and realities. Explained the speaker. Finally, he said, Bulgaria received contradictory CSRs, coupled with a lack of accountability and transparency, and the process to reach these recommendations is not clear. Because of these issues, a national pilot alliance was very well received. Currently, members include two trade unions, EAPN, and the European Women’s Lobby in Bulgaria – but the alliance is open to new members. The alliance was publically launched. All members will submit their positions by the end of June, to be then compiled into one input on the European Semester, to be discussed and endorsed by the full alliance. Communication and events are also planned, and the detailed work programme of the alliance is available for consultation.

Natalia Rogaczewska, CECODHAS / Denmark

The setting is not transparent so that the Commission and Member States can continue to blame each other for unpopular decisions. There is talk about giving Council formations more power to discuss the AGS, currently EPSCO and ECOFIN are the main actors. In Denmark, *there is a strong framework in the central administration responsible for this process, and it is very important to get to know one’s own national Semester setup within the Government.* There is not much discussion on substance, only some information sessions. The AGS is the key to the whole process, useful to influence it both before and after it is issued. The Social Scoreboard must be mainstreamed in the AGS, so that the social consequences of the CSRs can be seen. National budgets often gives a better sense of policy priorities than the NRPs itself, so it is very useful to look at budgets. It is also important to make the argument for social investment, to show the impact of good social policies also on the economy, and to communicate social issues better to the media and the public opinion, so that they are of interest also to other partners.

LEARNING POINTS:

- Cross-sectoral alliances are an important added-value
- Clear information about the timeline, process and interlocutors is key
- The link between national budgets and NRPs is very important
- The AGS needs to be assessed in terms of previous commitments made
- Important to identify who at the national level is part of the Semester set-up
- The lack of transparency is often deliberate
- The way consultations are organized is often meaningless, suggestions not taken up
- European Organisations in Brussels are essential in many ways:
 - Information, awareness-raising, capacity-building on the processes
 - Linking policy with practical output
 - Bringing voice and expertise of people to EU level

ACTION PLAN:

June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise general awareness and lobby Governments • Assess CSRs together and try to influence the media response to the CSRs • PR on the content and process of the CSR, highlighting how civil society contributes
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for civil-society networks/alliances to set themselves targets/timetable • Use CSRs to lobby national budgets
Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still opportunity to have impact in the media
Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for involvement through bilateral meetings, with EC, country desk officers, ESOs.
Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get Governments to react to AGS • Mobilize key political leaders, members of the national Parliaments, ministers and SPC members and MEPs Release / publicize opinions, reactions
Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet members of EMCO, SPC and EPC, as well as civil servants working in Ministries • Media actions, letters and PRs on Spring Council
15 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Develop your key messages/input in advance ⇒ Push for annexing the contribution of stakeholders to the NRP ⇒ Media reaction, information on the content/process and on engagement.

BLOCK 2: AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

HOW TO WORK IN CROSS-SECTORAL ALLIANCES

The afternoon session started with the second block of 3 parallel workshop sessions. Participants were asked to carry out a simulation of being a cross-sectoral working group in a chosen country, and to come up with joint proposals and comments on that country's Specific Recommendations, brought together in a statement. The idea was to simulate the reality, the benefit and challenges of cross-sectoral working, and to explore methods for building consensus. The final statements were then presented to the plenary.

Workshop 4	Facilitator: Mary Collins (EWL) Note Taker: Tanya Basarab (EAPN) Rapporteur chosen by group	Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All Danish participants + EWL Germany, FEBA Belgium• Brussels EOs: FEANTSA, EWL, Eurodiaconia, EASPD
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WORKSHOP 4 – DANISH CSRS

CSR STATEMENT:

- Overall approach – traditional economic growth models, that do not take into account care economy, environment, and inclusion, which breeds inequalities and goes against the Europe 2020 objectives
- Not innovative in addressing the crisis
- Complete lack of long-term perspective (social and socio-economic issues over the lifecycle); medium-term is not enough
- Lack of environmental, gender, and social impact assessment (using the Social Scoreboard and the Social Investment Package)
- Messages about equality being good for the economy are missing

CROSS-SECTORAL WORK:

- Need to be clear on what we feel is wrong, and think about ways to constructively communicate it
- Need to also underline what Recommendations are positive and can be supported
- Need to be vocal about the closed procedure and the lack of transparency
- Cultivate the added-value of input from the national alliance
- Greatest challenge: identifying common points and not focusing on divergent issues.

Workshop 5	Facilitator: Sian Jones (EAPN) Note Taker: Rebecca Lee (EAPN) Rapporteur chosen by group	Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Irish participants + Green Budget Hungary, EASPD Ireland, Cecodhas Ireland • Brussels EOs: PICUM, Eurochild, Cecodhas
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WORKSHOP 5 –IRISHCSRS (CONTINUED)

CROSS-SECTORAL WORK:

- Building trust over different sectors is essential
- Need to identify and agree a shared a vision
- Email work needs to be balanced with face-to-face meetings
- Issue of which language to use, the EU jargon about cost-effectiveness, or our own.
- Workshop 5 – Irish csrs

CSR STATEMENT:

- Written by different people without awareness of un-intentioned consequences
- Active labour market policies do not take account of childcare
- Focus on financial goals, not on the Europe 2020 targets and people’s wellbeing
- People are seen as economic units
- No comparative analysis of economic policy, as claimed
- No mention of quality (work, services, childcare)
- Some could be positive, but the outcome depends on the implementation
- Missing: environment, wellbeing, poverty, education, gender, people with disabilities, migrants, life cycle/multidimensional roles, active inclusion, pensions, retraining.

Workshop 6	Facilitator: Amana Ferro (EAPN) Note Taker: Nellie Epinat (EAPN) Rapporteur chosen by group	Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Bulgarian participants + PICUM Cyprus, Cecodhas France • Brussels EOs: EASPD, ETUC, Caritas
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WORKSHOP 6 – BULGARIAN CSRS

CSR STATEMENT:

- *Positive*: fight against corruption; Roma skills gap for Roma; poverty alleviation; access to lifelong learning; quality of education; supportive business environment for SMEs
- *Negative*: high flat tax rate; budget restrictions on deficit; inhuman to people with disabilities; lack of transparency for tax definitions; linking minimum income with activation; linking child benefits with school attendance; energy price.
- *Missing*: gender equality / pay gap; transparency on pension rate / reform; people with disabilities; quality healthcare; wage increases and quality work; link with environment, especially in the energy sector; support for migrants; living standards.

CROSS-SECTORAL WORKING:

- National level organizations are the only ones that can really assess the CSRs – alliances are very needed
- Need to get green organisations on board, their perspective was missing
- Hard to find key overarching messages, when so much is missing in the CSRs
- Alliance members' own channels and contacts are added values – working together means more opportunities to put messages out there
- Not difficult to come up with consensus, as CSRs are so wrong and incomplete.

CONCLUSION:

THE LEARNING WE TAKE HOME

The day ended with a final session in plenary, which included feedback from the morning and afternoon workshops. The Action Plans and the CSR statements were presented before assessing learning points and follow up with the Semester Alliance. An evaluation of the day closed the workshop.

KEY MESSAGES – AS PRESENTED TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- Very different national realities in terms of engagement and stakeholder involvement;
- Little or no debate about Europe 2020 at national level
- Need to build on existing engagement and build capacity/ and foster regular exchange on process,
- There's a big value-added from cross-sectoral/group working – building joint approaches but takes time, and investment in creative methods
- Crucial to raise awareness, think about media and communication tools.
- Political commitment is an essential pre-condition for progress -EU, guidelines for stakeholder engagement and stricter monitoring, financial support for civil society engagement are all vital.

The first Semester Alliance Capacity Building sent out a clear message of the need to raise awareness at the national level on Europe 2020 and the European Semester, to strengthen the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement at the EU and the national level, and to increase the involvement and ownership of the Semester Alliance. The workshop was highly interactive and provided a good understanding of the Semester process, and it received a very positive response and high appreciation from its participants.

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See the Alliance's publications and activities on <http://semesteralliance.net>

The *EU Alliance for a democratic, social and sustainable European Semester (EU Semester Alliance)* is a broad coalition bringing together major European civil-society organisations and trade unions, representing thousands of member organisations on the ground at European, national and local levels in the European Union.

The 'EU Semester Alliance' aims to support progress towards a more democratic, social and sustainable Europe 2020 Strategy, through strengthening civil dialogue engagement in the European Semester at national and EU levels.

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!



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The Alliance has received funding from the European Commission under the framework of a Joint Action, for an initial period of 1 year (1 year project funding supported by the EU Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity PROGRESS/EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation call VP/2013/006).

For more information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=en>

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