



socialplatform

Annual Conference 2008

Report for Workshop 4:

***New faces in Europe: how can we connect
with the 'hard to reach'
communities across the EU?***





Objectives of the workshop

- To outline the major channels for structured civil dialogue that may be useful for so-called 'hard to reach' communities to engage with the EU
- To highlight successful ways of working with communities in each part of the EU, in particular groups currently less involved in the European debate
- To share good practice on how to engage at local, national and European level, considering the link to individuals and also the connection between organisations at each level



Challenges

- Lack of awareness of EU decision-making process
- Insufficient capacity or resources in grass-roots organisations to be able to effectively participate in dialogue with institutions
- How to define 'hard to reach'? May differ according to culture and economic situation of each country; in this workshop reference was made to Roma, elderly, disabled, rural communities, women in specific conditions, people experiencing poverty, refugees, migrants... definition according to denial of rights
- Difficulty in sharing knowledge between countries; this may lead to lack of recognition of the good practices that already exist



What works well

- From ATD 4th World - the importance of entering the *time-frame* of beneficiary community and the willingness to go into their physical *space*; thereby gradually establishing trust
- From ERIO - the existing national cases from Spain (Catalonia) where Roma lead their *own* projects with support from the regional government
- From discussion - the opportunity to connect at all levels is dependent on: 1) the strength of links in civil society from local-national-EU; 2) genuine engagement of political actors to ensure that there is a full commitment to be responsive to the requests of organisations
- *Cahier de condoleances*, complaints book and management of user satisfaction with commitment to ensure follow-up process



Recommendations to organisations

- **Information to be provided to raise awareness of how to engage with EU and local/national government**
- **Empowerment of communities; through access to information of rights; platform to claim and guarantee respect of rights**
- **Education to raise overall skills base and opportunity for marginalised communities**
- **Organisations to establish clear procedure of transparency, training and accountability**
- **Organisations with knowledge of the system and adequate resources need to work across borders in networks to act as intermediaries between local-national-EU level**
- **Collect and use the facts, figures, pictures and film of the reality in each part of the EU to demonstrate the issues**
- **Importance of rights of individuals to avoid exclusion of any part of society, thereby preventing the formation of specific *groups* of 'hard to reach'**



Recommendations to institutions

- Accessible language for public information, both in terms of teaching language of the country and use of plain language to convey simple meaning
- Recognise role; work together; and support NGOs to access communities
- Importance of rights of individuals to avoid exclusion of any part of society, thereby preventing the formation of specific *groups* of 'hard to reach'
- Participation of officials in visits, exchanges etc to show face-to-face reality; EU officials are 'hard to reach community'!!
- Involve national governments and members of parliaments to participate in process of engagement
- Collect the facts, figures, pictures and film of the reality in each part of the EU to demonstrate the issues (Eurostat)



Recommendations (cont.)

- Participation of officials in visits, exchanges etc to show face-to-face reality; EU officials are 'hard to reach community'!!
- Organisations with knowledge of the system and adequate resources need to work across borders in networks to act as intermediaries between local-national-EU level
- Involve national governments to develop full possibility of participation
- Collect the facts, figures, pictures and film of the reality in each part of the EU to demonstrate the issues



Outstanding issues

- Funding provided does not correspond to the ambition of the EU
- Accountability of institutions, given that they are often seen as very distant from the beneficiary organisation
- Importance of rights and access to decision-making process in more robust participatory democracy (not just consultation)
- How to represent/connect civil society into the next steps following the Lisbon Agenda, to ensure economic recognition



Thank you!

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