

# TOOLKIT FOR ENGAGING WITH EUROPE 2020 AND THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER 2014-2015

## ANNEX 5 – List of Useful Stakeholder Engagement Quotes - from EU documents

### **Europe 2020 Communication**

The original Europe 2020 Strategy Communication of the European Commission underlined the importance of a partnership approach:

*This partnership approach should extend to EU committees, to national parliaments and national, local and regional authorities, to social partners and to stakeholders and civil society so that everyone is involved in delivering on the vision.*

....

*The success of the new strategy will therefore depend critically on the European Union's institutions, Member States and regions explaining clearly why reforms are necessary – and inevitable to maintain our quality of life and secure our social models -, where Europe and its Member States want to be by 2020, and what contribution they are looking for from citizens, businesses and their representative organisation.*

Finally, the European Commission calls on all parties and stakeholders (e.g. national/regional parliaments, regional and/or local authorities, social partners and civil society, and last but not least the citizens of Europe) to help implement the strategy, working in partnership, by taking action in areas within their responsibility.

### **Integrated Guidelines**

In the Integrated Guidelines underpinning the Europe 2020 Strategy (**Recital 16**) specific support is given to the partnership principle involving stakeholders at all stages of the NRPs:

*When designing and implementing their National Reform Programmes taking account of these guidelines, Member States should ensure effective governance of employment policy. While these guidelines are addressed to Member States, the Europe 2020 strategy should, as appropriate, be implemented, monitored and evaluated in partnership with all national, regional and local authorities, closely associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, who shall contribute to the elaboration of National Reform Programmes, to their implementation and to the overall communication on the strategy.*

The official website of the European Commission of the Europe 2020 Strategy has a [section dedicated to the role and involvement of civil society](#), acknowledging it as an important element for the drafting, implementation and assessment of the NRPs.

### **Annual Growth Survey**

The Annual Growth Survey for **2011** specifically mentioned, in its Annex 1 – Progress Report on Europe 2020:

*In parallel national consultations should be finalized in order to secure strong ownership of the NRPs. These consultations should involve political actors (national parliaments, regional and local authorities) as well as social partners and other stakeholders in the preparations. Only a limited number of cases have the draft NRPs already been the subject of consultation at different levels. While some Member States indicated that they would engage in consultations before finalizing their NRPs, most have not provided information on the consultation process.*

The same document reminds the common structure that all NRPs should have, including information on the involvement and contributions of the different stakeholders.

Unfortunately, there are no mentions of stakeholder engagement in the Annual Growth Survey for **2012**, neither in any of its Annexes (such as the Progress Report on Europe 2020 or the draft Joint Employment Report).

In the Annual Growth Survey for **2013**, the following rather ambiguous reference can be found:

*The Commission will work closely with national authorities, including national parliaments, EU Institutions and other stakeholders to create a shared sense of ownership and steer progress as part of wider EU efforts to exit from the crisis and to lay the foundations for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth across the EU.*

The exact same sentence above is reprised in the Annual Growth Survey for **2014**. IN addition, however, there are two more explicit references. “Greater ownership at national level” is identified as the first area where improvements are needed for deepening of the European Semester:

*In many Member States, there is a need for greater involvement of national parliaments, social partners and civil society in the process in order to secure public understanding and acceptance of the necessary reforms. The Commission continues to recommend that the National Reform Programmes (NRP) and Stability or Convergence Programmes (SCP) be discussed with national parliaments and all relevant parties, notably social partners and sub-national actors.*

The second useful reference reads as follows:

*It is also clear from experience to date that national ownership of the process (and in particular of the country-specific recommendations) needs to be developed further. This is important for the democratic legitimacy of the new governance system as well as to ensure that EU level policy elements are factored into national decision making at the right time.*

## **Guidance on the content and format of National Reform Programmes**

The Note explicitly asks Member States to dedicate a specific section, 2 pages long, detailing how stakeholders were involved in the drafting of the NRP, including national Parliaments, social partners, civil society, regional and local authorities. The text clearly states:

*Involvement and participation of all actors is essential to ensure ownership and facilitate external progress on the implementation of country-specific recommendations, objectives and targets. This section should thus explain the institutional process for the approval of the NRP as well as the involvement of the national institutional actors (national parliament, regional/local authorities, social partners / civil society).*

The document equally says that:

*The comments and/or contributions of social partners and other stakeholders may be summarized here and/or provided in Annex.*

The Annex do the Guidance Note also contains a very encouraging paragraph:

*Involvement and close association of parliaments, social partners and representatives of civil society is essential to ensure ownership and facilitate progress on the implementation of policy recommendations, objectives and targets. Low level of involvement of such actors is one factor behind increasing criticism regarding lack of democratic legitimacy of the European Semester. Member States are invited to use the opportunity of the National Reform Programme to encourage such involvement and to report on the process as regards the preparation of the NRP and in the implementation of past guidance and commitments.*

## **Guidance for the Strategic Social Reporting 2014**

The text contains only one reference, in the section defining what should be the content of the Introduction of the NSR:

*This section will briefly present [...] information on the consultation of national stakeholders and the procedure for approval (only for the National Social Reports).*

## **Social Investment Package**

⇒ **European Commission Communication: Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020**

*Involve stakeholders, particularly civil society organisations close to the target groups for social interventions, in programming and implementation and facilitate their access to funds.*

*Member States are urged to strengthen the involvement of relevant stakeholders at all levels, most notably social partners and civil society organisations, in the modernization of social policy as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy.*

*The Commission will work closely together with Member States in the context of the relevant Council formations, the SPC and other relevant committees to support these reflections and will continue the dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, notably in the context of the Annual Convention of the Platform against Poverty and Exclusion.*

⇒ **Commission Recommendation: Investing in Children – breaking the cycle of disadvantage**

*Promote partnership in the programming of and access to Structural Funds by involving relevant stakeholders at national, regional and local levels, in particular the relevant public authorities, social partners and non-governmental organisations, in order to mobilise action to combat child poverty.*

*Promote close cooperation and regular dialogue between public authorities at all levels, social partners, local communities and civil society organisations.*

⇒ **Commission Staff Working Document: Follow-up on the implementation of the Active Inclusion Recommendation<sup>1</sup>**

*Participation of relevant stakeholders should be built into the design and evaluation of national active inclusion strategies in line with the 2008 recommendation on active inclusion.*

*No involvement or very limited involvement of all relevant actors in the development, implementation and evaluation of active inclusion strategies is reported by larger social networks (EAPN, Eurodiaconia, and Cities for Active Inclusion - EURO CITIES). Whilst EAPN members can highlight no current examples of participation of stakeholders in the design and delivery of an explicit AI strategy, they highlight active participation in the National Action Plans/Social Reports under the Social OMC (2000-2010) and/or NRPs, often promoting strong proposals on Active Inclusion. In the first NRPs of Europe 2020, whilst 13 National Networks were invited to participate in the NRP process (AT, BE, BG, DK, EE, FR, DE, IE, LU, NL, PT, ES, SE), the level of meaningful stakeholder participation was scored very low (2.38 of 10), with most scoring very low (AT, BG, CZ, DK, EE, IE, IT, MT, NL, PL, RO, SK, SE, UK), with only Belgium and Spain giving a positive rating (7 and 8). However, even in these countries, it was difficult to get proposals taken on board, and in the case of Spain, to get implementation.*

*More specifically, it is required that the national active inclusion strategy is in accordance with the poverty and social exclusion target of the country concerned, involves the relevant stakeholders and provides a sufficient evidence base to monitor developments.*

*Engage relevant actors more vigorously in the development, implementation, and assessment of policies! Active inclusion is a joint responsibility in European societies. Efforts to engage the relevant actors need a boost. The actors include those affected by poverty and social exclusion, civil society organisations, nongovernmental organisations, local administrations and the private sector. They should get involved in designing strategies that help those furthest from the labour market to get jobs, thus bringing valuable human capital to national economies.*

*The successful implementation of active inclusion strategies will require well-coordinated and intensified efforts at local, national, and European levels, and this document contains concrete policy guidance to assist governments, civil society organisations, and practitioners.*

*Civil society organisations have reported limited involvement in the design and implementation of active inclusion strategies at national level.*

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<sup>1</sup> Follow-up on the implementation by the Member States of the 2008 European Commission recommendation on active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market - Towards a social investment approach Accompanying the Commission's Communication: Towards Social Investment For Growth And Cohesion - Including Implementing The European Social Fund 2014-2020.

## ⇒ **Staff Working Document on Confronting Homelessness in the European Union**

*Reinforcing partnerships and involving a wide range of stakeholders to combat homelessness including national ministries and public authorities, NGOs, charity organisations, public space controllers, healthcare, social housing and social economy actors, police and judicial system workers; mobilizing volunteers.*

*Three elements prove to be particularly useful in improving governance when responsibilities are shared between different levels of government and NGOs: the overall leadership must remain in the hands of the public authority in charge of homelessness and housing exclusion policies; all stakeholders who participate in the programme should be consulted on policy design and implementation and there should be a consensus on the strategy.*

### **Social Dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union**

While social dialogue is extremely prominent in the Communication, civil dialogue, stakeholder involvement and exchanges with civil society are not mentioned at all in the text.

### **Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion**

**José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission**

*The conventions of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion offer something extremely valuable: the opportunity to gather all interested parties and discuss ways of working together. Especially important is the fact that here we have represented many people who are working on the issue of poverty really on the ground that can give us all the experience, the inputs of their daily experience. I believe we need that, at the European Union institutions and also at the governmental level.*

### **Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**

*Awareness and ownership by all relevant actors – governments, parliaments, regional and local authorities, social partners and all stakeholders – is a crucial prerequisite for success. In many Member States, the involvement of the different stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy could still be improved. In this context, the role of the national reform programmes should be re-assessed.*