

*Stakeholders' Involvement
in Social Inclusion Policies*



**Discussion Paper for the Working seminar – 12th February
2010 - on stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the
social inclusion strand of the open method of coordination**

**[EUROPEAN COMMISSION Contract N° VC/2008/0325 - Study
on Stakeholders' Involvement in the Implementation of the
Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in Social Protection and
Social Inclusion]**

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**Please forward any comments, questions to
contact@stakeholders-socialinclusion.eu**

**We also invite you to consult our web site to look at national reports, case studies and
links to other studies and work on this subject**

www.stakeholders-socialinclusion.eu



OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR

- To inform key stakeholders about the current state of stakeholders' involvement in the OMC in the 27 Member States
- To communicate and discuss the study's provisional results, and validate its findings
- To discuss its conclusions and recommendations on "quality participation assessment criteria" on stakeholder involvement in the social OMC

STUDY OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

The overall objective of the Study on Stakeholders' involvement in the Implementation of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in Social Protection and Social Inclusion is to analyse the key challenges in relation to the governance dimension in the revised Common Objectives for the fight against poverty and social exclusion, in particular as concerns the involvement of stakeholders.

Specifically, the main outcome of the study is to provide the Commission with recommendations, benchmarks, examples of good practices and tools successfully applied by relevant stakeholders, regarding the quality and permanence of the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the OMC.

Five main results should be achieved:

- An assessment of the extent of stakeholder involvement in the OMC in the social sphere in the different Member States (on basis of national country reports), gathering in a single document the knowledge already collected by different actors to increase visibility;
- An analysis of the main characteristics and issues at stake related to the stakeholders' role in the different process steps of the OMC, highlighting what has improved but also what remains to be done;
- Examples of good practices of stakeholder involvement in the OMC; and
- Finally, recommendations on "quality participation assessment criteria" for the Commission, to feed debate and help policy makers and other stakeholders to adopt better practice in participation and governance-related issues in the context of the OMC, including tools ready for action (e.g. tables, grids, checklists);
- Additionally, for visibility and dissemination of the results and to provide information on stakeholder involvement in the policy process and on "good governance" more generally, a public website (www.stakeholders-socialinclusion.eu) has been established.

Stakeholders is understood here as those people and organisations that are affected by something – for instance a policy, programme, action or organisation – literally, those who have a stake in it. Research and analysis in the field of social inclusion policies identifies five main categories of stakeholders relevant to the OMC: policy-makers, social partners, representatives of civil society working in the field of social inclusion, experts, the public at large. Naturally, the full range of types of stakeholders is considerably more varied than this five-fold categorisation might suggest. Within each policy level (European to local) different types of stakeholders are involved in social inclusion and social protection policies.



Preliminary remarks

The study focuses on the stakeholders' involvement as far as it relates to policies against poverty and social exclusion (the first strand of the revised OMC), though it does not ignore the other two strands of the social OMC.

The timeframe of the study takes into account the social OMC since its beginning in 2000, but with a more particular focus on the most recent period (streamlining of the three strands since 2005).

The study focuses primarily on the stakeholders' involvement in the OMC as a process, not on their involvement in social inclusion policies as such, even though the latter are one of the official objectives of the OMC, and the two issues cannot strictly be distinguished.

The project follows an empirical methodology, however assessing the extent of stakeholder involvement in the OMC in the social sphere faces a number of limitations. It should be kept in mind that the study, most of whose outputs are addressed to a public audience, is not an evaluation.

Introduction to seminar/workshops... as step in the study process

During the study process it became obvious that there are certain "success factors", or preconditions, that affect a sustainable broader stakeholder involvement in the OMC process. On the basis of these findings, a set of "draft scoring indicators" have been drafted. The draft indicators have been developed as a basis for discussion on the future implementation of the OMC in social inclusion. The graphs demonstrating the use and the draft indicators are based on national reports. They are for illustrative purposes only, and should not be seen as definitive.

On one hand they should allow a deeper assessment of the quality of stakeholder involvement in the various Member States. On the other hand, these key elements might form the basis for the recommendations on "quality assessment criteria" to be drafted as a final output of the study.

In its guidance note to Member States for preparing the National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010, the European Commission highlighted the following key issues for better governance in the social OMC process:

- Preparation process: allowing the appropriate involvement of actors concerned
- Policy coordination: arrangements to allow policy cooperation to take place between policy domains (horizontal) and levels of government (vertical)
- Mobilisation of actors: ensuring the mobilisation and involvement of actors through the process
- Mainstreaming: arrangements to mainstream social inclusion issues into other policies
- Monitoring and evaluation: arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the strategy

The findings of the study have been organised around this already existing framework. Two further sections have been added dealing with the:

- Increased transparency of the process to reinforce accountability and ownership
- Impact of stakeholder involvement in the OMC process

The – probably non-exhaustive – quality aspects or draft indicators should be discussed by participants in the workshops during the seminar in more detail.



Discussion Paper

Theme 1: Preparation process

1. Key Findings

Relevant stakeholders

For any policy issue, the potential range of stakeholders is vast. For multi-dimensional policy issues such as poverty and social inclusion, the range is even greater. Not all potential stakeholders will be relevant actors for all issues, or at all levels of policy-making and phases of the policy cycle. In the study (see annex 1), a distinction is made between:

Decision-making bodies i.e. in charge of the political decision;
Secondary stakeholders, i.e. intermediaries in the policy process, such as service providers and advocacy organisations; and
Primary stakeholders, i.e. those ultimately affected by the policy (most importantly persons experiencing poverty and exclusion).
These stakeholders operate at different levels: European, national, regional or local level.
Where the OMC is concerned, a very large range of institutions and individuals are relevant stakeholders, in particular within the category of secondary stakeholders.

Identification and selection of relevant stakeholders

Given the wide range of potential stakeholders in this multi-dimensional, multi-level and multi-phased issue, the key questions are:
How are potential stakeholders identified?
What criteria do public authorities use to select appropriate stakeholder bodies to be involved in the social OMC process?

It emerges from the experts' reports that the identification of relevant stakeholders for the social inclusion process seems to be quite ad hoc in the majority of countries. There exists no example of systematic mapping of potential stakeholders in the relevant fields.

Engaging with multiple stakeholders

A majority of countries have created or are using pre-existing multi-stakeholder groups/committees to contact and engage with different categories of secondary and primary stakeholders. These committees are the main fora for discussing social inclusion issues, either specifically within the OMC process or generally for all policies relating to that topic.

Standards for consultation

Around a quarter of the Member States use formal minimal standards for stakeholder consultation, set down either in law or in a code of practice, even if not specifically developed for the use within the OMC process.
On one hand these regulate the who, the composition of stakeholders in certain committees.
On the other hand standards are used in the context of general good governance setting out the how to consult stakeholders.

2. Examples of interesting practices:

Standards of Public Participation, Austria

Quite comprehensive Standards of Participation, specifically for use by the administrative staff of the federal government, have been developed in AT. The standards set out both general principles for public participation as well as detailed instructions for the different steps of public participation processes. Their use is not laid down by law, but it is recommended at the federal level.



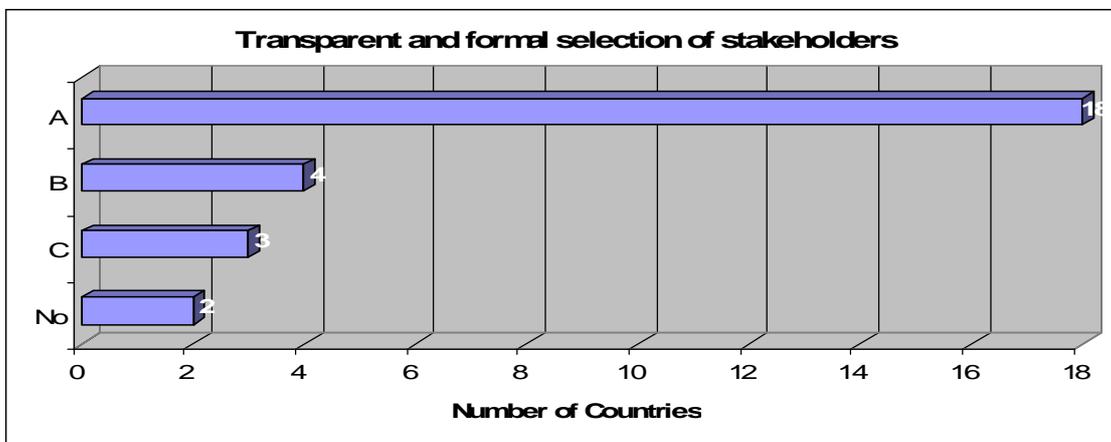
The Participation Working Group's Principles for Participation, UK

The Participation Working Group in the UK developed specific principles for the facilitation of the participation of people in poverty. The group met during the early part of 2003 to devise ways of increasing citizen participation in the preparation of the 2005 and subsequent NAPs. The resulting plan recognises that the process of stimulating participation must be a slow and steady one. Appropriately, the 11-member working group included five 'grassroots' members. The plan's indicators of success included a better understanding of poverty and its complexity, a better reflection of poverty as it is experienced, a clearly co-ordinated approach that people understand with clear accountability, a meaningful NAP, cross-departmental government commitment, accessible public material in a variety of media, and sequenced local events. Interestingly, one barrier to participation it identified was "consultation fatigue" – and the suggested remedy was accountability and demonstrable results.

3. Draft indicators¹

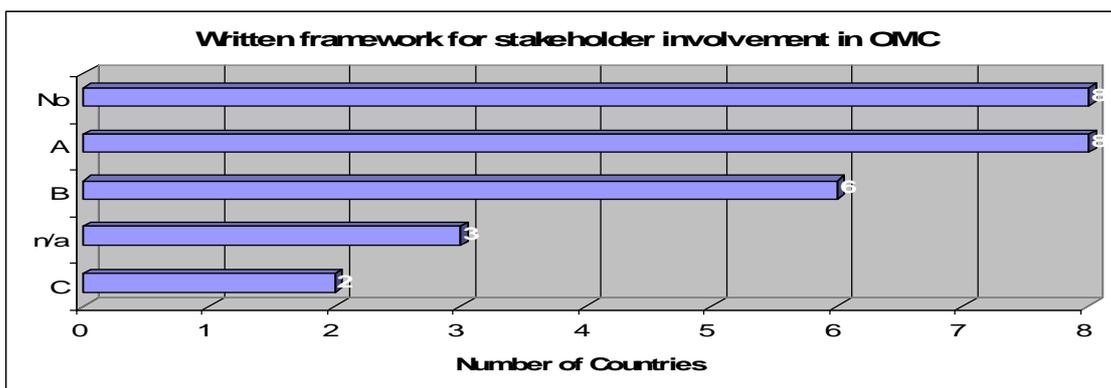
Possible indicators and variables for key aspects of the preparation process are the following:

Transparent and formal selection of stakeholders



A: Unpublished guidelines (e.g. internal to ministry)
 B: Published guidelines on who should be involved, when and how
 C: A law defines who should be involved, when and how
 No: nothing exists; N/a: no information available

Written framework for stakeholder involvement in OMC

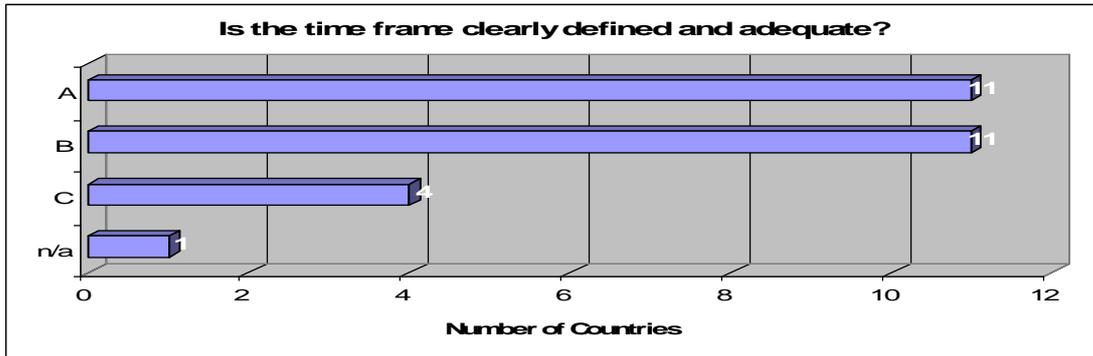


A: internal ministry guidelines exist
 B: a published framework exists
 C: a law exists
 No: nothing exists; N/a: no information available

¹ The draft indicators have been developed as a basis for discussion on the future implementation of the OMC in social inclusion. The graphs demonstrating the use and the draft indicators are based on national reports. They are for illustrative purposes only, and should not be seen as definitive.

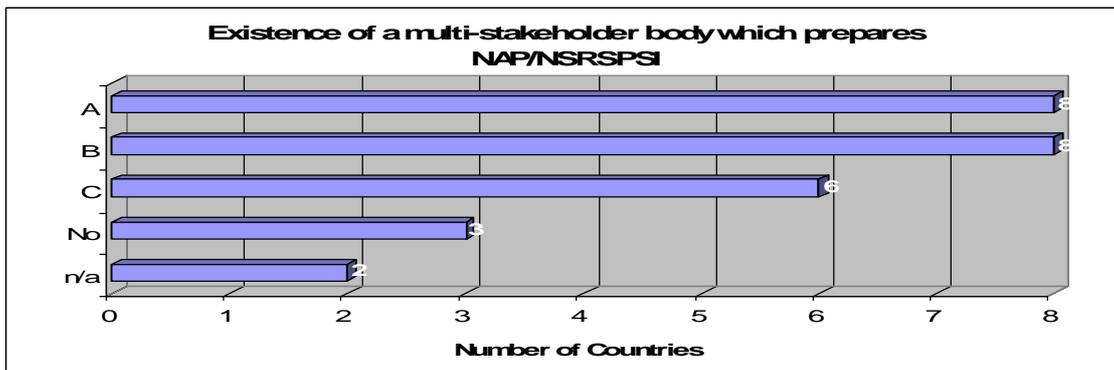


Is the time frame clearly defined and adequate?



- A: Stakeholders are given insufficient time to comment on drafts
- B: Stakeholders generally have enough time to prepare comments, but not to consult their constituencies widely before so doing
- C: Stakeholders are aware of the timetable of the NAP/NRPSPI cycle and have plenty of time to consult their constituencies and prepare positions
- No: no consultation ; N/a: no information available

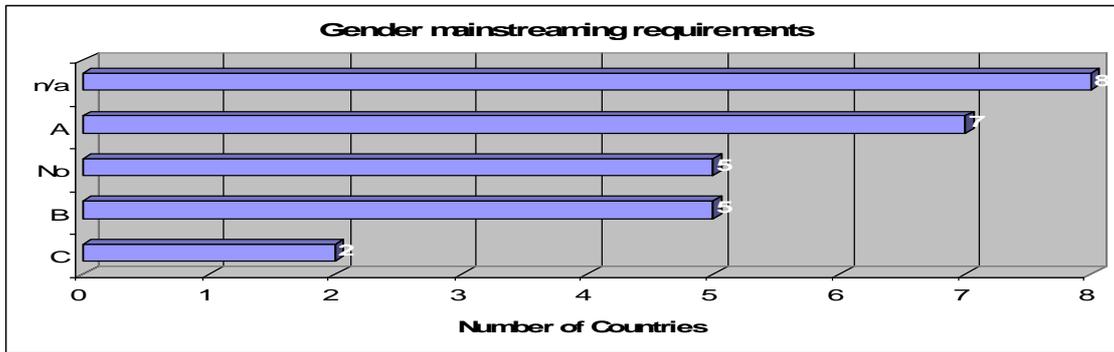
Existence of a multi-stakeholder body which prepares NAP/NRPSPI



- A: A multi-stakeholder body exists, but has opaque membership criteria and rarely meets
- B: A multi-stakeholder body exists and meets regularly; but some relevant stakeholders are missing
- C: A multi-stakeholder body exists, has comprehensive stakeholder membership, meets regularly and is administered transparently
- No: There is no multi-stakeholder body; N/a: no information available



Gender mainstreaming requirements



- A: The official gender institute/ equality commission etc. is informed about the NAP/NRPSPSI and/or inclusion strategy*
- B: The official gender institute/equality commission etc. makes an input into the content of the NAP/NRPSPSI and/or inclusion strategy*
- C: The official gender institute/equality commission etc. is permanently involved in all phases of the NAP/NRPSPSI cycle (e.g. in the multistakeholder group)*
- No: The official gender institute is not involved at all; N/a: no information available*

4. Key questions for the workshop

In your experience what are the methods/ways used to identify stakeholders? What are the arguments for and against these?

In your experience, are stakeholders selected using formal or informal selection criteria? What are the arguments for and against the selection?

Standards of consultation are an important tool to ensure the quality of the consultation process. What do you think of these, for example looking at the Austrian example? Could they be promoted at European level?

Is the existence of a multistakeholder group, that meets regularly and has a comprehensive membership, a good way to ensure involvement of all relevant stakeholders within the preparation process of NAP/NSRSPSI? What are arguments for and against it?

Gender issues should be mainstreamed within social inclusion. In your experience what are the methods used to do so? What are the arguments for and against these?

Is the formal participation in the NAP/NSRSPSI process of the official “Equality Body” an appropriate and sufficient means?



Theme 2: Policy coordination and mainstreaming

1. Key findings

Existence of vertical coordination mechanisms

Stakeholders operate at different administrative / policy levels, from the European level to the local level. Ensuring the coordination between actors involved in policy making at national, regional and local levels is important for policy cooperation in the different fields. While this depends on the institutional set-up in each country, the national level is responsible for national strategic goals and plans, and also for the implementation of (some) policies e.g. employment. In federal or decentralised countries, the regional level is a key actor and should collaborate in setting national strategic goals, and in the design and implementation of some policies. Finally, in the majority of countries, the local level is responsible for the implementation of a range of social inclusion policies such as allocation of minimal integration income or social housing.

Vertical policy cooperation mechanisms exist in a majority of countries. These can be formal (e.g. representation on the committee in charge of NSRSPSI; usual cooperation mechanisms), informal (e.g. circulation of draft, ad hoc meetings) or through a specific project (e.g. the campaign in the Czech Republic). However, it is impossible within the remit of this study to say whether these mechanisms are really working to ensure policy cooperation in all policy fields relating to social inclusion and across all levels. Nevertheless, there are some interesting examples of how this policy cooperation has been tried out.

Existence of horizontal mechanisms / interministerial coordination body

Within the streamlined Social OMC, the study has explored the existence of structures or processes that articulate policy priorities by making a two-way link between social inclusion policy and areas such as employment, healthcare and long-term care. Experts highlight that priorities are not strongly articulated and that the coordination is mainly an administrative process which exists within the EU reporting requirements.

Experts' reports demonstrate that the interministerial coordination of social policies exists in a number of countries, either formally or informally.

Horizontal coordination between policy fields can also exist at sub-territorial level, i.e. at regional level.

2. Examples of interesting practices

a. Examples of vertical coordination

Social Reporting NRW – Regional cooperation project with local municipalities, Germany

Implementation of a new concept of social reporting on regional level, to conceptually and methodically link the local and regional social (poverty) reporting to improve this instrument and finally to improve and link policy planning on the regional and local levels. This new concept has been introduced under the influence of the OMCincl.

Initiative to involve municipalities and regional governments in planning social services, Czech Republic

An example of the introduction of a new, participative, form of governance at the lower levels of public administration. From the view of involvement of stakeholders in the OMC, ideally, there would be an impact of community planning on the involvement of local governments, NGOs, experts, and indirectly also on the involvement of people at risk of social exclusion ("clients") and the public at large. In such a way, despite a relatively narrow focus on social services, a wide spectrum of key stakeholders would be activated and involved.



Participation Summit, Netherlands

One off initiative organised by the cabinet as an instrument for intensive consultation and for the involvement of the local level (municipalities via the Association of Dutch Municipalities) – next to other stakeholders (employers, trade unions)

b. Examples of horizontal and policy coordination:

Involvement of all relevant actors in regional planning, Italy

An interesting experience is the Venetian panel for social policies activated in 2004 with the aim of involving public and private actors, profit and non-profit, in designing the future regional welfare model. The panel set up a Regional Social Workshop to involve all stakeholders in the definition of minimal levels of assistance rights, valid at regional level (in an attempt to compensate for the lack of national minima), considered by the panel as 'indispensable elements for the realisation of equal and sustainable local welfare systems'

Law on horizontal policy coordination at regional level, Belgium

The Flemish Poverty Decree (2003) stipulates that the Flemish Minister of Welfare is also responsible for the coordination of the anti-poverty policy of the different policy fields and different ministers. The consultation is both vertical and horizontal. In each department, for each policy field a special civil servant is appointed to pay special attention to fight against poverty. He examines policy and legislative proposals as regards their effects on poverty and social exclusion, and consults people who live in poverty, who are organised in the Flemish Network of Associations of People with Experience of Poverty. For example the official responsible at the Department of Work and Social Economy meets with the Employment and Social Economy working group very regularly (approximately every six weeks).

Governance process of a Regional plan for social inclusion, Spain

Example of participatory process for the involvement of NGOs in the planning, implementation and evaluation of an regional plan for social inclusion (II PRIS) in Castilla-La Mancha through the European Anti-Poverty Network of Castilla La Mancha (Red EAPN-CLM).

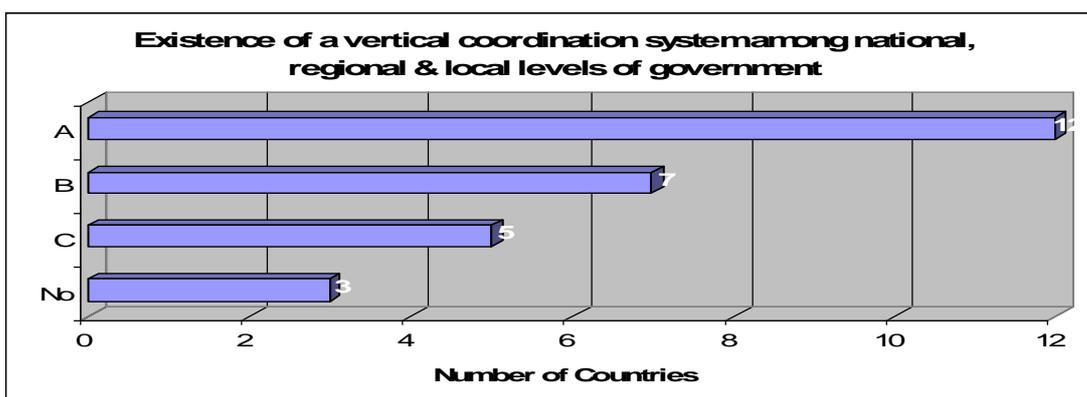
Lifelong Learning (LLL) Strategy development process, Austria

Comprehensive process with intensive stakeholder involvement to design the Austrian strategy for LLL, facilitated by external experts and involving all ministries, as well as other stakeholders. The strategy development forms part of the OMC in LLL.

3. Draft indicators²

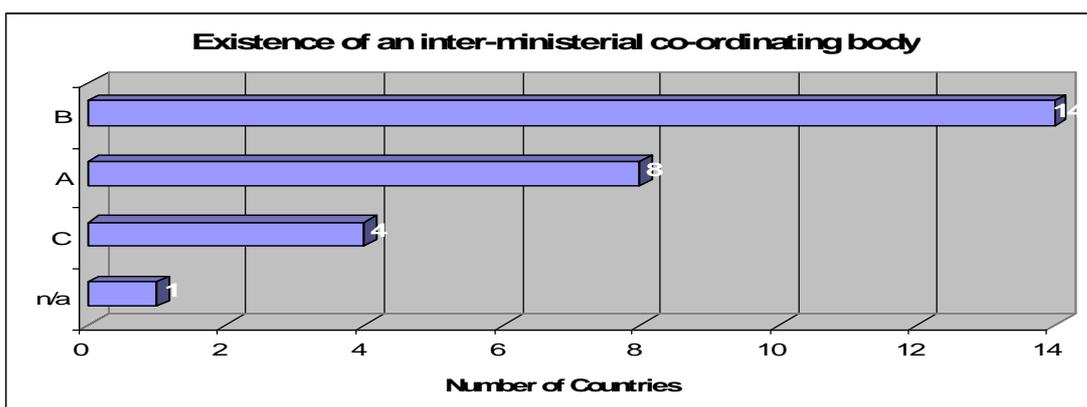
This indicator refers to coordination among the national, regional and local levels of government.

² The draft indicators have been developed as a basis for discussion on the future implementation of the OMC in social inclusion. The graphs demonstrating the use and the draft indicators are based on national reports. They are for illustrative purposes only, and should not be seen as definitive.



A: Local and regional authorities have a chance to contribute once per NAP/NSRSPSI cycle
B: Local and regional authorities are consulted on an ad hoc basis throughout the NAP/NSRSPSI cycle, on inclusion issues that concern them
C: Local and regional authorities are permanently involved in all phases of the NAP/NSRSPSI cycle.
No: no vertical coordination mechanisms existing; N/a: no information available

This indicator refers to coordination among the different ministries concerned with the policy areas touching on social inclusion.



A: The lead ministry circulates the draft NAP/NSRSPSI and/or inclusion strategy to other ministries once in each NAP/NSRSPSI cycle
B: Other ministries are consulted on an ad hoc basis throughout the NAP/NSRSPSI cycle, on inclusion issues that concern them
C: A permanent body involves all relevant ministries, and discusses the NAP/NSRSPSI and/or inclusion strategy regularly
No: no horizontal coordination mechanisms existing; N/a: no information available

4. Key questions for the workshop

- What is the value of formal versus informal policy coordination mechanisms?
- What is the value of permanent versus ad hoc mechanisms/structures for policy coordination?
- What is the role of multistakeholder groups such as the one described under theme 1 (preparation process) in terms of horizontal and/or vertical policy coordination?
- How to avoid overlapping and overloading consultation process?



Theme 3: Mobilisation of actors

1. Key Findings

The involvement of stakeholders is important in all phases of the policy process, from the preparation of policy, through decision-making and implementation, to monitoring and evaluation. This study looks at the patterns of involving different categories of stakeholders (decision-makers, secondary and primary stakeholders) through all these phases.

In summary, the following aspects can be highlighted:

Decision-makers	The government is involved in some countries, but mainly at the stage of decision-making.
	The key role of the national and regional (at least in federal countries) administration in piloting the process of NSR and therefore also the consultation/involvement of stakeholders.
	The low participation of parliaments in many countries.
Secondary Stakeholders	NGOs working with the poorest people, whether part of the service delivery side or representing their interests (advocacy role), are generally involved in the NSR process, mainly at the design phase.
	Social partners – employers as well as trade unions – are in many countries formally involved, but in some do not really participate, and concentrate on the Employment OMC process. This is particularly the case for employers.
	Service providers (other than NGOs) at local level are represented through existing vertical coordination mechanisms.
	Media are not a key actor in disseminating information on the social inclusion OMC process.
	Experts and academics are generally involved, in particular at the stage of preparation and evaluation of policies.
Primary Stakeholders	People experiencing poverty are involved in some countries but mainly in the design phase and to some extent in the evaluation phase.
	The public at large is neither involved in nor substantially informed about the social inclusion OMC process, or at least the information provided is generally not labelled as European policy.

Methods used to involve stakeholders

The range of approaches to stakeholder participation is large. Within the study five main degrees of involvement have been used, ranging from the one-way provision of information (= to inform), through a two-way process of communication and involvement (= to consult and to involve), to full engagement of stakeholders as equal partners and decision-makers (= to collaborate and to empower). See in annex table B.

Generally, methods to gather views need resources in terms of time and budget. A number of examples mentioned have been EU-financed projects or one-off events. However in a few countries some more institutionalised mechanisms are in place.

2. Examples of interesting practices

a. to inform:

- In Lithuania, LaBAS awareness-rising project – raising awareness of the population about Social OMC using national media campaigns and social advertising.



- In Germany, a series of seminars to inform a wider audience about the OMC and relevant topics in the area of social inclusion (called FORTEIL – Forum Teilhabe und soziale Integration), and the Infobörse project. Infobörse is a web portal that provides information about the OMC, gives an overview of the numerous poverty and social reports that exist at regional and local level, and supports the exchange of good practice in the area of social inclusion.

b. to consult:

- The internet portals in Finland include a consultation facility.
- In Estonia, a *Participation Website* channelled several suggestions and questions from the public at large, NGOs, etc., which were answered in detail and if possible, included in the plan. Due to the active involvement of different stakeholders via oral consultations, the Participation Website, round tables, etc., the plan went through several modifications to include a variety of views and interests (according to an official of the Ministry of Social Affairs).
- NAPSI together, Czech: A comprehensive project (financed under PROGRESS) focused on the enhancement of stakeholders' participation in the OMC process as well as on increased quality and legitimacy of a social inclusion agenda in the Czech Republic. It also intends to increase public awareness about issues of social inclusion and raise political commitment to social inclusion. Its main focus is the participative creation of a new draft for NAPSII (2010-12).

c. to involve:

- Support for preparatory capacity-building meetings before the Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) to help participants to play an active role is organised in Ireland.
- Participants in hearings organised in Finland were given an opportunity to make written comments on the draft report before it was finalised.
- The *Regards Croisés* project in France gathered 108 participants in 3 regions to comment on the NAP 2006-2008. Reports on workshops were made available on a website, and it was possible to amend them.
- The Get Heard project in United-Kingdom: 146 local workshops, involving a wide range of beneficiary groups, were held to raise awareness of and involvement in the OMC

d. to collaborate:

- Group Decision Room in the Netherlands, which is an electronic meeting support system providing a 'safe' way for all participants to give their own views. As a result of the last consultation round (in 2008) a separate booklet has been published with the input gathered but not directly or entirely used for the NAP/NSRSPSI.
- The Permanent Council of Advisers for Social Integration (Ständiger Beraterkreis für soziale Integration) in Germany involves around 40 umbrella organisations representing the most diverse stakeholders (federal government, regions, associations of local authorities, social partners, Deutsche Bank, German statutory pension insurance scheme, statistical office, service providers, churches, civil society including representatives of people experiencing poverty). This Permanent Council deals with the National Strategy Report.

e. to empower

- Partnership Working Group in United-Kingdom
- In the UK, NGOs, both advocacy organisations and service providers for vulnerable groups, have worked in close partnership with the government. They were, via the Participation Working Group, allowed to play a leading role in developing the partnership methodology which led to two large awareness-raising projects.

Examples of methods used for involvement of specific groups

Some specific methods are used to gather the views of people experiencing poverty or the views of specific groups:

- Conferences organised by EAPN to involve people experiencing poverty have proved to be successful, like the annual "Participative Meeting for Social Inclusion" in



Luxembourg. Similar events, or dialogue groups, have been organised other Member States.

- The State Council for Roma people, in Spain, a permanent structure under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Policy to integrate the needs of Roma population, via an inter-ministerial organ with consultative and advisory powers, ascribed to the Ministry of Health and Social Policy through which an institutional channel is established in the collaboration and cooperation of the General State Administration with the Roma NGOs for the development of social policies. Almost all of the Ministries are represented in the Council, such that the relation of the Roma NGO movement is not limited to the responsible social ministry.
- Hearings, even specially organised to gather the views of children in Finland.

Examples of institutionalised forms of stakeholder involvement are:

In Germany, the Permanent Council of Advisers on Social Inclusion, which has existed since 2001 and involves around 40 umbrella organisations representing the most diverse stakeholders, involving also few people experiencing poverty;

In Belgium, organisations of people experiencing poverty, structured in networks, are represented in the advisory committee of the department for combating poverty, a permanent institution created in 1998 which involves both political representatives and actors concerned;

In France, the CNLE (Comité national des Politiques de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale) and its NAP working group;

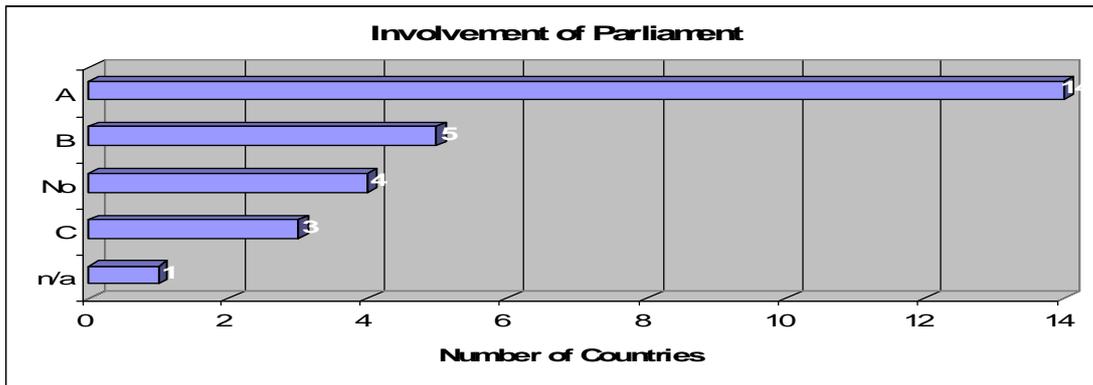
3. Draft indicators³

The following five indicators cover the stakeholder groups for which the country reports reveal significant variations in involvement in the OMC process



A: Formally approve NAP/NSRSPSI – i.e. sign it off
 B: Make an input into content of NAP/NSRSPSI
 C: Show personal engagement with the process of NAP/NSRSPSI
 No: no involvement; N/a: no information available

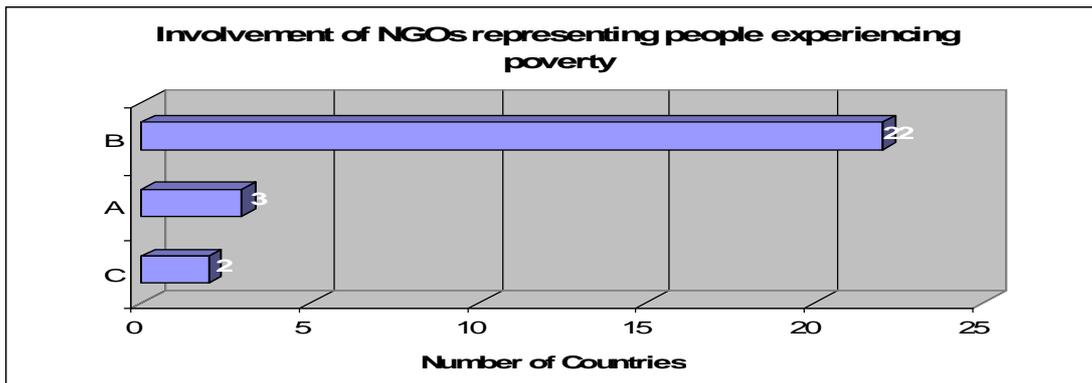
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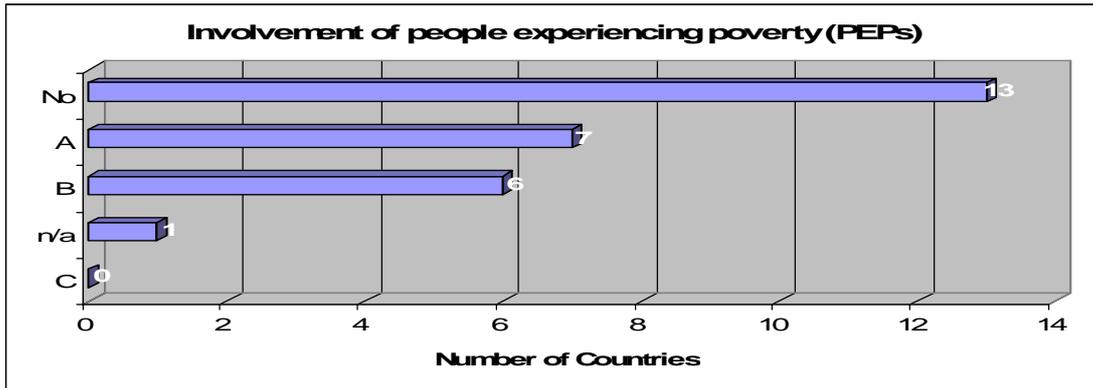
A: NAPs/NRPSPSIs are made available (e.g. in library) but not debated
 B: MPs give formal approval to NAP/NRPSPSI, inc. by committee (e.g. EU scrutiny committee).
 C: MPs debate NAP/NRPSPSI in plenary or in committee (e.g. select committee or cross-party group) or ask questions of ministers on NAP/NRPSPSI
 No: no involvement ; N/a: no information available



A: Invited to meetings
 B: Attend meetings and comment on policies
 C: Give formal approval to NAP/NSRSPSI, e.g. in “social partnership”
 No: no involvement ; N/a: no information available



A: Invited to meetings
 B: Attend meetings and comment on policies
 C: Give formal approval to NAP/NSRSPSI, e.g. in “social partnership”
 No: no involvement
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A: Invited to meetings

B: Attend meetings and comment on policies

C: Give formal approval to NAP/NSRSPSI, e.g. in “social partnership”

No: no involvement

N/a: no information available

4. Key questions for the workshop

- What are the main methods or techniques to involve:
 - Social partners
 - NGOs
 - People experiencing poverty
 - Public at large

- Does this vary according to the phases of the process?

- Do you consider that the classification in table A (see annex) covers all the relevant stakeholders to be involved in the OMC social inclusion process?

- Do you consider that the levels of participation from inform to empower as presented in table B (see annex) are relevant?



Theme 4: Involvement of stakeholders through the policy cycle: monitoring and evaluation

1. Key findings

As expressed by the Commission⁴ major decisions on social inclusion policies can be taken in between OMC reporting deadlines, so the participation of stakeholders should be embedded in a continuous process.

In particular, the existence of monitoring and evaluation of policies as well as the involvement of stakeholders in it are important factors to make policies more effective. Involvement of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation is also a sign of commitment to a more sustainable and continuous participation of stakeholders. Particularly at this stage, the experience and expertise of people experiencing poverty, NGOs working with them (either as their representatives or as service providers), as well as academic expertise are important indications of an appropriate stakeholder involvement.

Such arrangements are also important to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan as well as the assessment of its impact on eradicating poverty and social inclusion (see theme 6).

It should be mentioned that in many cases difficulties were encountered in defining with sufficient clarity what exactly is meant by the “implementation” phase of the social OMC. It is clear that stakeholders are involved in processes of policy development, monitoring, feedback etc. that are explicitly part of the OMC and talked about as such. And they may be involved in implementing the actions that make up the OMC process – for instance by taking part in consultations. However they may also be involved in delivering the services on the ground that result from the OMC decisions. While the intention has been to stick to the first of these meanings, it has been found that many people involved tend to discuss policy delivery as the “implementation” of the OMC.

No very clear pattern emerges for the monitoring and evaluation phase. Administration and government take part but to a lesser extent than in other phases. On the contrary, experts are more involved in this phase, social partners are present in 11 countries and people experiencing poverty in 5.

2. Examples of interesting practices

Involvement of stakeholders in the development of statistical information, Luxembourg

Since 2005, a research project on Social Surveying in collaboration with 14 municipalities in the northern regions (RESONORD) has been gathering and analysing social data in order to prepare for a more accessible and efficient inter-municipal organisation of social services in rural areas. A new statistical method to include the perspective of primary stakeholders is being piloted by the General Inspection of Social Security (IGSS) to better analyse the impact on individual households and thus the adequacy of policy measures by using case models and microdata.

Technical Advisory Group, Ireland

An example of the involvement of people experiencing poverty in institutions responsible for official statistics. In 2007 the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which develops statistical indicators of poverty and exclusion, extended its membership from originally comprising only government departments and agencies to bring in social partners and the community and voluntary sector. The TAG also developed a data matrix to monitor progress.

⁴ European Commission, Joint Report on Social Inclusion and Social Protection 2009, p. 67, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=751&langId=en&furtherPubs=yes>



Agreement to involve NGOs at implementation level, Sweden

A new method of involving key stakeholders during the implementation phase through “agreements” between the state and individual NGOs. These agreements formalise the tasks of the individual organisation in implementing the policy, and give the NGO state recognition including support (e.g. financial) and a formalised agreement on the role and responsibilities of both sides in terms of service delivery to the excluded groups. The system allows NGOs to deliver “targeted and innovative services to socially excluded groups”.

Another approach to poverty indicators: a dialogue between people living in poverty and other key stakeholders, Belgium

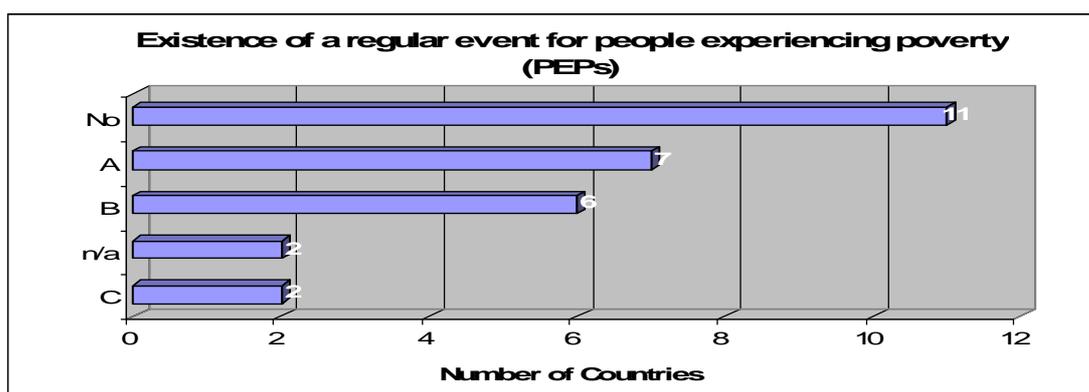
In 2002-2003, a research-action project dedicated to updating qualitative and quantitative indicators relating to poverty was conducted in Belgium. There were 23 programme participants, 12 of whom lived in poverty.

The goal was to find parameters which best took into account reality as experienced by the poor when drawing such indicators and to enable the very poor to participate directly in this research with scientists and representatives of the various governments and institutions concerned by the problem of poverty. As a result, the participants have exposed certain essential elements of poverty which are hardly, or not, being taken into account by current indicators.

3. Draft indicators⁵

Existence of regular event for people experiencing poverty

This indicator reports on whether the NAP process includes a regular event which people experiencing poverty attend, along with possible preparatory capacity-building.



A: There is at least one event per NAP/NSRSPSI cycle at which PEPs can express their opinion

B: There is an annual event at which PEPs can express their opinion

C: There is a regular event, which uses participative methods to enable PEPs to work on issues concerning the NAP/NSRSPSI and/or inclusion strategy

No: no regular event; N/a: no information available

4. Key questions for the workshop

In your experience are relevant stakeholders involved:

- in implementation?
- in monitoring?
- in evaluation?

What are the arguments for and against the involvement of particular categories of stakeholders (primary, secondary and decision-makers) in these phases?

⁵ The draft indicators have been developed as a basis for discussion on the future implementation of the OMC in social inclusion. The graphs demonstrating the use and the draft indicators are based on national reports. They are for illustrative purposes only, and should not be seen as definitive.



Theme 5: Transparency and accountability of the process

1. Key Findings

Stakeholders' participation should have an influence on policy change. This requires that stakeholders are informed about the objectives and limits to public participation. In this respect, feedback on whether issues are taken on board, how priorities are set, and why and which decisions are taken is an important issue for any stakeholder involvement and indicates whether dialogue is taken seriously. Stakeholders often complained about the non-existence of such mechanisms.

According to the experts, around a third of Member States have some form of feedback mechanism in place. This can be via regular meetings and reporting in committees, or multistakeholder groups involved in the OMC process, as is reported for Belgium and France.

Another issue relates to the allocation of resources (in particular financial) to the consultation process. The capacity of the administration in terms of human resources dedicated to this issue of NAP/NSRPSI process is clearly an indication on whether this process is taken seriously. On the other hand, the possibility for stakeholders, in particular NGOs with limited resources, to get some compensation/financing for their participation in the OMC process is also a key issue in terms of their capacity to contribute actively and regularly to consultations.

The objectives for and context of participation in any process should be clear and defined. The OMC is quite young and still very unknown. So information on the OMC, its objectives and features should be made available and easy to find.

The policy profile/priority (or not) of the issue in the country has an influence on the "seriousness" of the social inclusion OMC process.

2. Example of interesting practices

Group Decision Room, Netherlands

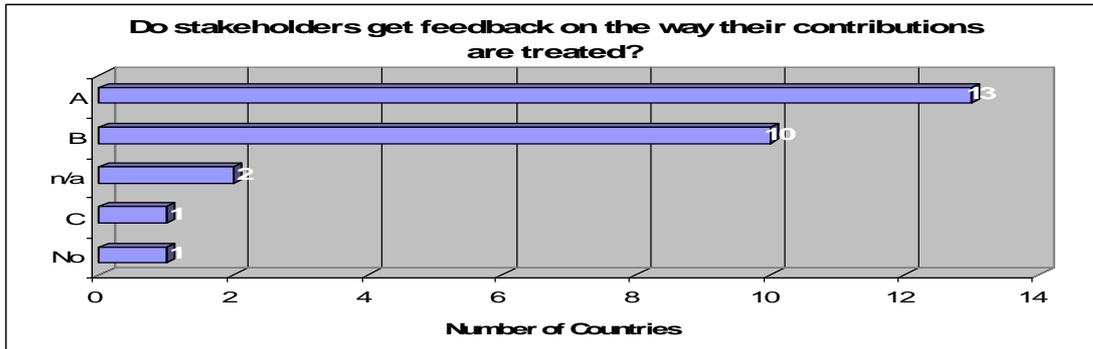
An instrument/technique to accelerate discussion and decision-making processes. It has been used during the last two rounds of preparation of the NAPs/incl 2008-2010. It enables wide stakeholder input (via electronic facilities/laptop). Everything that is introduced can be immediately read on a central screen and can be used as inspiration. Also input can be given in an anonymous way. As a by-product of the NAP/incl. 2008-2010 process, the national government published a booklet with all input which was not (fully) used for the NSR;

People's Health Development Plan, Estonia

A comprehensive participative process for the drafting of the Estonian People's Health Development Plan for 2009-2020, which forms part of the National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Inclusion (NRS) 2008-2010, prepared under the OMC. Stakeholder involvement was based on the Good Engagement Practice guidelines and a Participation Website was used for consultation. Regarding feedback mechanisms, suggestions and questions from the general public, NGOs, etc., are answered in detail and all questions and answers, comments, descriptions, explanations etc. are published on the website.



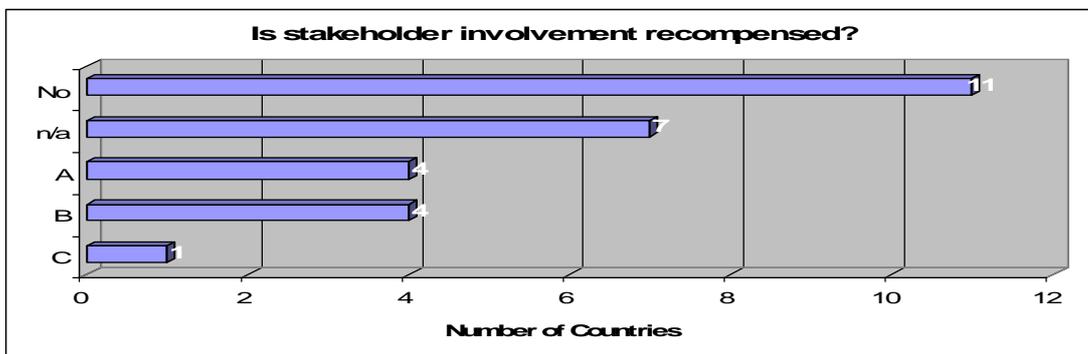
3. Draft Indicators⁶



- A: Stakeholders have to take the initiative to find out how their comments were treated*
- B: The government makes a general statement (e.g. at a stakeholder meeting) about its reaction to stakeholder comments*
- C: The government discusses the comments and the actions (not) taken individually with all key stakeholders*
- No: no feedback provided*
- N/a: no information available*

Recompensed/resources

This indicator shows the extent to which NGOs representing people experiencing poverty are recompensed for the costs they incur and time they spend in taking part in the OMC process (but excluding funding for their overall administrative costs). This indicator is also useful to assess the capacity of actors, in particular NGOs, to contribute to the OMC process.



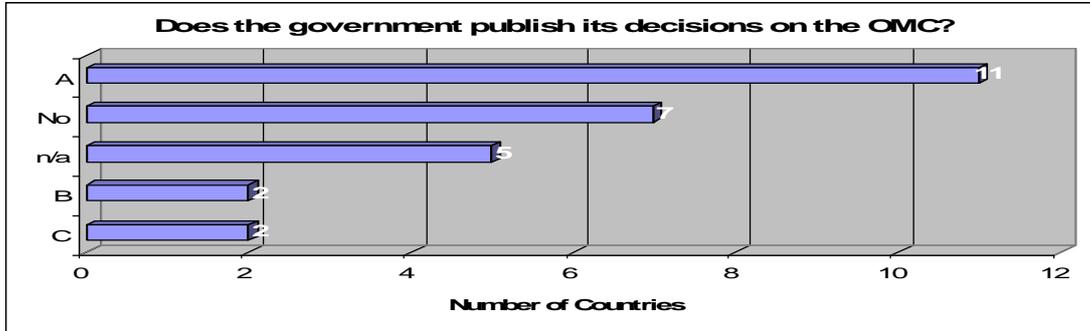
- A: NGOs active on poverty are reimbursed expenses for attending OMC meetings*
- B: NGOs active on poverty can claim an attendance allowance for attending OMC meetings*
- C: NGOs active on poverty receive core financing for their OMC work*
- No: no involvement*
- N/a: no information available*

⁶ The draft indicators have been developed as a basis for discussion on the future implementation of the OMC in social inclusion. The graphs demonstrating the use and the draft indicators are based on national reports. They are for illustrative purposes only, and should not be seen as definitive.



Does the government publish its decisions on the OMC

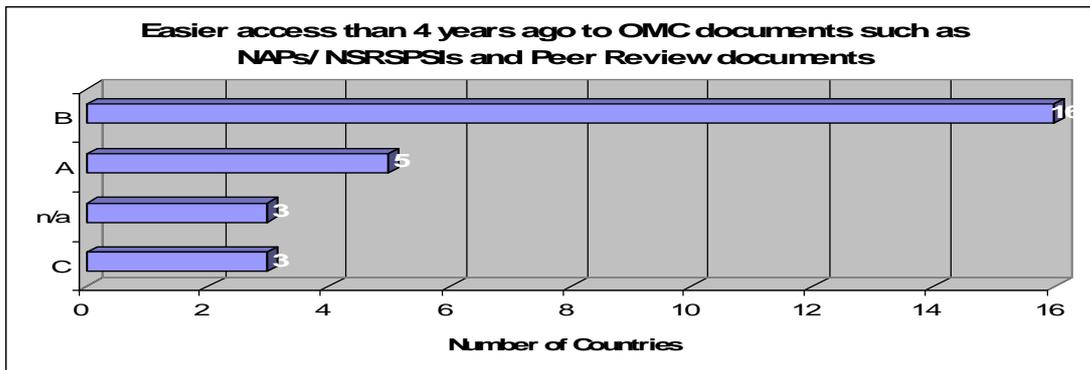
This indicator shows whether the government publishes its own and stakeholders' comments that from part of the OMC.



A: Government issues press releases on its decisions regarding the OMC
 B: Stakeholder comments are published (e.g. on the web)
 C: Stakeholder comments are published (e.g. on the web) along with details of resulting actions taken or not taken
 No: no publication; N/a: no information available

Easier access

This indicator looks at whether OMC documents have become easier to obtain, for the general public as well as stakeholders, over the past four years.

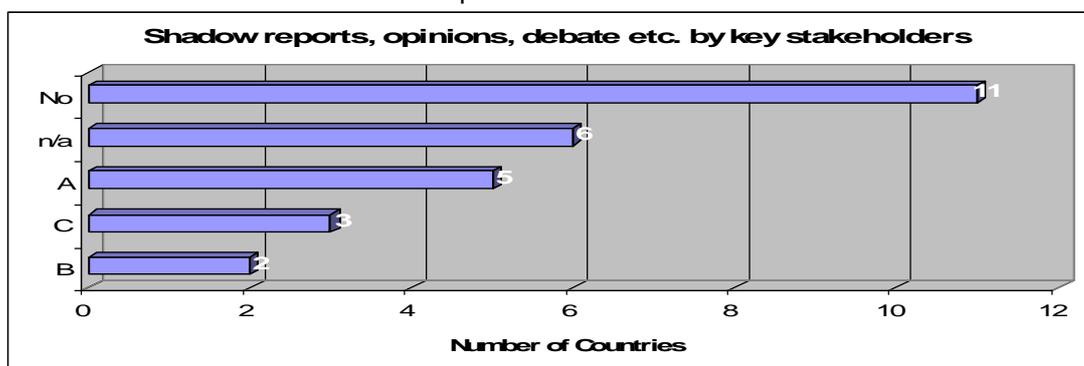


A: Stakeholders have to ask the authorities in order to obtain OMC documents
 B: A list of OMC documents is published and stakeholders can obtain them
 C: The government has an active dissemination strategy for the OMC, and sends OMC documents to interested parties
 No: no access ; N/a: no information available



Shadow reports

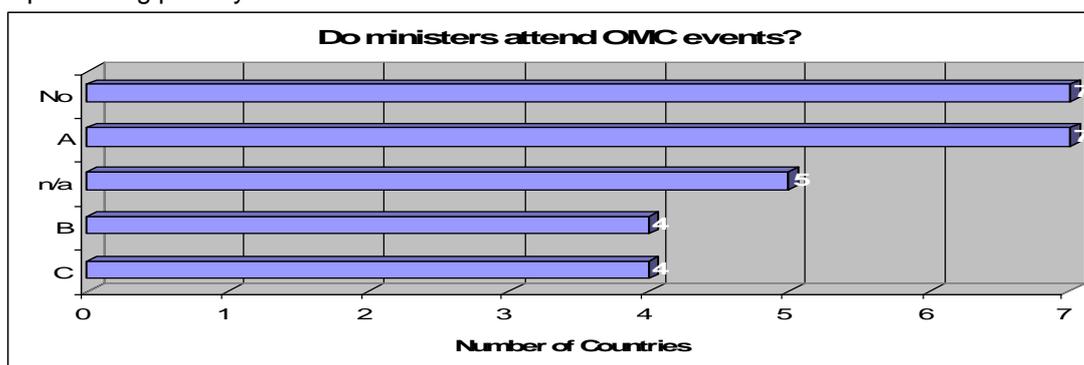
This indicator is about whether different stakeholders' documents are formalised and form part of the information flow within the OMC process.



A: Documents and opinions produced by stakeholders are shared with all stakeholders
 B: Documents and opinions produced by stakeholders are debated among all stakeholders
 C: Documents and opinions produced by stakeholders are integrated in, or referred to, in official MC documentation
 No: no documents ; N/a: no information available

Do ministers attend OMC events

The indicator used here is the attendance and level of engagement of ministers or state secretary at OMC events, such as conferences, seminars or events involving people experiencing poverty.



A: Government ministers make public announcements concerning the OMC
 B: Government ministers occasionally attend meetings concerning the OMC
 C: Government ministers meet people experiencing poverty at OMC events
 No: no attendance by Ministers; N/a: no information available

4. Key questions for the workshop

- In your experience are stakeholders informed about the goals and limits of the consultation? How is this concretely organised?
- In your experience what are the methods/ways used to give feedback to stakeholders? How to improve this and avoid consultation “fatigue”?
- Are documents relating to consultation on the NAP/NSRSPSI widely available to interested persons? Are documents relating to the OMC process also generally available (peer review documents, indicators etc.)?
- Are stakeholders financially recompensed for their participation in consultation process in general and in particular in the OMC social inclusion process? If no, why are arguments used against it?



Theme 6: Impact

1. Key aspects

Evidence of impact of stakeholders' involvement on policy process or outcome is not easy to prove. A number of experts expressed difficulty in presenting hard facts on this. However, in most Member States elements or impressions expressed by the different stakeholders themselves illustrate the positive impact of stakeholders' involvement in the OMC in social inclusion either in terms of:

Involvement in the policy process, improved ownership
Policy outcomes

2. Examples of impact on policy process

Involvement of stakeholders in terms of improved policy process

- Learning between regions or decentralised level in federal state
- Policies being focusing more on concrete practices
- Increased cooperation of different actors because of their involvement in the NAP process
- Positive impacts on policy process, including: new links between partners, and partners and decision-makers, and actors in same category (e.g. administrations); improved working relationships; new knowledge esp. from grassroots re implementation; influence of local experimentation generating high potential for mainstreaming.
- Small stakeholders use umbrella organisations to voice their standpoints.
- Improved accountability of the administration through the OMC process (preparation, reporting)
- Consensus reached between NGOs and decision-makers on goals and measures of the strategy
- The hearing of organisations is considered very important. The organisations provide closer connection to civil society and are strongly involved in policy processes.
- Introducing the concept of strategic planning, operationalised targets, use of indicators, together with putting and keeping the issues of poverty and social exclusion on the political agenda
- The OMC on social inclusion had an impact in terms of putting the issue of poverty on the political agenda and empowering NGOs representing excluded people to participate in policy dialogue on social exclusion initiatives.
- EU OMC has contributed more holistic view of inclusion, and showed government ways of working with stakeholders.

There is even a series of examples of positive impact on policy outcome in different Member States:

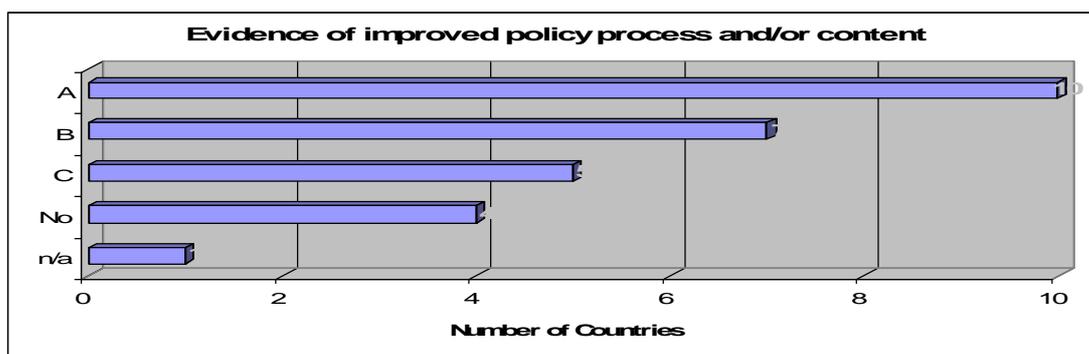
Examples of impact in terms of policy outcomes:

- BE: A senior official from the ministry responsible for social inclusion issues recognises a positive impact of stakeholder participation mainly through a better understanding of the situation, problems and possible solution. This was the case in the field of active inclusion and in the fight against illegal eviction. For a representative of the anti-poverty network, there is a clear impact of their dialogue into the NAP: some of their proposals were included in the draft plan and accepted by the government. Others were taken out but are still on the table of the action group.
- CZ: The "People in Need" programme developed by NGOs on the basis of their field work and targeting Roma communities has significantly influenced a governmental programme. This initiative was also addressed in a peer review in CZ.



- IE: Indebtedness, the Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit, policies on disability and on the activation of lone parents have got onto the agenda thanks to NGO input. More subtle influence comes e.g. from ministers meeting poor people face-to-face at SIF meetings.
- LU: The meetings' main topics on costs for childcare (2006), affordable health care (2007) and access to housing and basic services (2008) generated focussed political attention on these aspects. The 2007 meeting, for instance, criticised the reimbursement system in health care as discriminatory for poor people who are not able to pay for medical services in advance, and therefore dangerously omit or postpone necessary health visits. In the same year, the National Ethical Committee took up the topic. And in 2009, the concept of third-party payment for poor and vulnerable groups (tiers payant social) figures in the election manifestos of all Luxembourg political parties. Similarly, the 2008 discussion on access to housing further pushed the initiative to set up the "Social Estate Agency".
- Malta: Stakeholders now have direct access to policy formulation and as such constitute an important lobby that affects policy outcomes
- PT: The national homelessness strategy is a good example of improved involvement and ownership.
- RO: The participation of a disabled person in a governance position has had an impact on legislation and programmes.
- UK: NGOs (SPTF) claim specific outcomes on:
 - housing benefit (First NAP)
 - child poverty (2003 NAP)
 - debt as a social inclusion issue (2006-8 NAP)
 - getting working poverty onto the Government agenda (2006-8 NAP)
 - volunteer expenses for people on state minimum income (2007)
 - the cost of benefit advice phone lines (2007)

3. Draft indicators⁷



A: Stakeholders can only give marginal evidence of / feel that policy process or content were improved as a result of their involvement (e.g. new links between representative organisations)

B: Stakeholders attribute / can give a clear and precise example of improved policy process or content as a result of their involvement (e.g. new links between representative organisations & decision-makers, improved working relationships)

C: In addition to stakeholders giving such clear examples of improvement, the government attributes improved policy process or content to stakeholder involvement

No impact ; N/a: no information available

⁷ The draft indicators have been developed as a basis for discussion on the future implementation of the OMC in social inclusion. The graphs demonstrating the use and the draft indicators are based on national reports. They are for illustrative purposes only, and should not be seen as definitive.



4. Key questions for the workshop

Do you monitor and evaluate the impact of the participation of stakeholders on the policy outcomes?

Do you agree that organised participation/consultation in the OMC social inclusion process reinforces your capacity as an organisation/administration?

What is the impact of participation of service providers in the consultation process within the OMC? Does this reinforce their ownership?

PLEASE FORWARD ANY COMMENTS, QUESTIONS TO
contact@stakeholders-socialinclusion.eu

**WE ALSO INVITE YOU TO CONSULT OUR WEB SITE TO LOOK AT NATIONAL REPORTS,
CASE STUDIES AND LINKS TO OTHER STUDIES AND WORK ON THIS SUBJECT.**
www.stakeholders-socialinclusion.eu



Annexes

Table A – Stakeholders’ involvement and phases

STAKEHOLDERS	Design preparation including setting	and agenda	Decision-Making	Implementation	Monitoring and evaluation
Decision makers					
Government (minister, cabinet)					
Parliament					
Administration (civil servant)					
Secondary stakeholders					
Employers					
Trade unions					
Representative organisations of service providers					
Representative organisations of vulnerable groups					
Other civil society organisations					
Experts					
Media					
Other					
Primary stakeholders					
People experiencing poverty and social exclusion					
Public at large					

Table B – Degrees of stakeholder dialogue and engagement⁸

1.INFORM	2.CONSULT	3.INVOLVE	4.COLLABORATE	5.EMPOWER
Purpose:	Purpose:	Purpose:	Purpose:	Purpose:
To provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the issues, opportunities and solutions.	To obtain feedback from stakeholders on the findings of analyses, options and/or decisions.	To work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and views are consistently understood and considered.	To collaborate with stakeholders as partners throughout the process, including in the analyses and development of solutions and in making decisions.	To place final decision-making in the hands of stakeholders.
Promise to stakeholders:	Promise to stakeholders:	Promise to stakeholders:	Promise to stakeholders:	Promise to stakeholders:
We will keep you informed (but we will not find out your views or take these into account in any decisions).	We will keep you informed, will listen to your views and will provide feedback when the decisions are made (but we do not guarantee that your views will influence the decision).	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and views are directly reflected in the analyses and in the solutions developed, and we will provide feedback on how your inputs influenced the final decision.	We will give an important place to your views and experiences during the process, and will seek your suggestions and advice on solutions. We will take your views into account in the final decision, to the maximum extent possible.	We will support you in reaching a consensus and will implement what you decide.
Examples of techniques:	Examples of techniques:	Examples of techniques:	Examples of techniques:	Examples of techniques:
Newsletters Websites Information days	Focus groups Surveys Stakeholder meetings	Workshops Deliberative polling	Stakeholder advisory committees Consensus-building Participatory decision-making	Stakeholder juries Ballots Delegated decisions

⁸ Based on IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, developed by the International Association for Public Participation