

*European Public Value and the Caritas Social Vision –  
An Interim Assessment of  
Europe’s National Social Inclusion Strategies*



Photo: Reiner Riedler

**Written by the  
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Under the CONCEPT project



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***European Public Value and the Caritas Social Vision –  
An Interim Assessment of  
Europe’s National Social Inclusion Strategies***

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The Von Hügel Institute is a leading inter-disciplinary research centre focused on topics of social exclusion, poverty and public policy. Its *Centre For Faith in Society* is the leading British Centre for social science research on the thought and practice of faith communities in general and Catholic social institutions in particular. An integral part of St Edmund’s College, University of Cambridge, and with Research Associates active in the work of the wider University, we specialise in social inclusion, civil society, and public policy and management. The Centre maintains close working relationships with leading universities across Europe, Africa and North America. Its recent publications include major studies on migrants in the EU, education and citizenship, development, social economics, faith and social enterprise, business ethics and the future of the third sector. The Centre’s recent commissions have been from the World Bank, Triodos Bank, various UK government departments and the Cardinal, Archbishop of Westminster. Recent media credits include on RTE Radio (Ireland), BBC TV, BBC Radio and the Dutch, Polish, Irish and Australian national press. For further information about the Von Hügel Institute please visit [www.vhi.org.uk](http://www.vhi.org.uk)

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## Preface

In 2005, in the framework of its Community Action Programme on combating poverty and fighting social exclusion, the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) issued a Call for Proposals aimed at supporting key European networks engaged in this field.

*Caritas Europa*, the European network of national *Caritas* organisations active in 44 European countries, including all the member states of the European Union, was one of the six European networks selected by the European Commission to be supported under this budget line for the Community Action Programme. This selection was based on the proposals submitted by *Caritas Europa* for a work programme under the acronym CONCEPT (**C**aritas **O**rganisations **N**etwork to **C**hallenge the **E**xclusion and **P**overty **T**rap).

The European Commission (DG EMPL/E) and *Caritas Europa* signed the relevant co-operation and co-financing contract initially for one year, from 1 December 2005 until 30 November 2006. Meanwhile, the contract has been renewed for a second year, from 1 December 2006 until 30 November 2007.

In the first year, the CONCEPT work programme aimed at engaging as actively as possible the specialist personnel from all *Caritas* member organisations in the EU member states – or their affiliated organisations – in the civil dialogue that was regarded as an important part of the process leading to the creation of the 2006-2008 National Action Plans (NAPs) on Social Inclusion, which were part of wider National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (hence, we will refer to them as the “National Strategic Reports (NSR)”). Each member state was required to submit its new NAP/NSR by 15 September 2006. The aim of the work programme in this first year of the partnership between the European Commission and *Caritas Europa* was to facilitate and encourage a meaningful participation of *Caritas* – as a social actor with a large capillary outreach and in direct touch with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion – in the process of elaborating these national strategy papers.

One of the different elements of the agreed CONCEPT work programme for the second year was the production by *Caritas Europa* of a ***Report on the Analysis of the Quality, Coherence and Potential Effectiveness of the National Reports on Social Protection/Social Inclusion 2006 – 2008***. This report aims to analyse the content and the process of the 27 member states’ national strategies according to a number of criteria with regard to quality, coherence and potential effectiveness.

The research and analysis, as well as the structuring and writing of this report, were outsourced to the Von Hügel Institute, a Catholic research institute that is part of St. Edmunds College, University of Cambridge, under the leadership of Mr. Francis Davis, CONCEPT participant for the UK and consultant to the CONCEPT programme and steering group. However the report is very much based on the direct experiences, evaluations and assessments by the CONCEPT ‘network of national *Caritas* experts’ that *Caritas Europa* has created and trained during the first year of the CONCEPT programme.

This report aims to offer the European Commission, national authorities and stakeholders involved in the European Union’s social inclusion strategies a *Caritas* view with regard to the process of creation of the 2006-2008 National Strategic Reports. It examines the National

Strategic Reports of 27 EU member states according to the European Public Value - *Caritas* Social Vision framework.

## **Acknowledgements**

*Caritas Europa* acknowledges with gratitude the contributions and inputs provided by so many people in the production of this report.

First and foremost we are grateful to the CONCEPT participants, the national *Caritas* experts in EU member states who worked so hard engaging in their national strategy building processes.

Our gratitude also goes to the dedicated people in the CONCEPT steering and consultancy group, particularly Robert Urbé (Luxembourg), Juraj Barat (Slovakia), Patrick de Bucquois (Belgium) and Francis Davis (UK). Behind them was the wisdom and support of the members of the Social Policy Commission of *Caritas Europa*, to whom we are also indebted, as we are to the Executive Board of *Caritas Europa* for its guidance and encouragement.

We are very appreciative of the hard work done by the Social Policy Team of *Caritas Europa*, most notably Adriana Opromolla, the coordinator of the CONCEPT programme, and Natallya Kaval Kova, the communicative “spider in the web” of the CONCEPT network within *Caritas Europa* network, as well as to all other members of the team of *Caritas Europa* who have contributed knowledge, expertise and hard work to this programme.

Much gratitude and appreciation is due to the team of researchers at the Von Hügel Institute who did a massive job brilliantly in a very limited timeframe. Particular mention here should go to Jenny Rossiter and Jolanta Stankeviciute.

Finally, we are deeply grateful to the team of the European Commission at DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities for having selected *Caritas Europa* as one of the six networks it supports, for the confidence shown in our potential to become a valuable partner for the European Commission in its efforts to enhance social inclusion and to combat poverty within the Union, and for their consistent support, guidance, advice and co-operation in our endeavours to be a meaningful and competent partner for the European Commission in this respect. In this case we are especially grateful to MM. Adam Tyson, Luca Pirozzi, Walter Zampieri and many others within the European Commission for their active support.

Brussels, February 2007

Marius Wanders  
Secretary General  
*Caritas Europa*

## **Executive Summary**

### **1. The Report**

The present study forms a unique output from the *Caritas* CONCEPT programme. A second, but linked, output will be the final report at the end of 2007.

The European Commission and other partners will be pleased to know that a third – and additional output – will be a book length publication in early 2008 describing *Caritas*' work in general and its contribution to the European anti-poverty process in particular. This will be published by Matthew James Publishing in the UK. All three “outputs” will be prepared by the Von Hügel Institute.

### **2. The Research Focus**

Commissioned by *Caritas Europa*, our aim has been to make a *fresh* assessment of the quality, coherence and potential effectiveness of the design and implementation of the National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008. As implementation is only just beginning – or not even begun – in some member states this report should be seen as part of a whole with the final report. We asked particularly:

- Did the national social inclusion strategy process add European Public Value in terms of social and policy innovation, civil society participation and the development of new governance networks?
- Do the NAPs/NSR meet the EPV-*Caritas* Social Vision standards for the social dimension of Europe?

By using the frame of European Public Value (EPV) we are seeking a more robust language for affirming the social dimension of Europe. *Caritas* members do not wish this social dimension to be reduced to its “economic factor” or to traditional Anglo-Saxon “shareholder value”. EPV is a first step towards *Caritas Europa* building new frameworks that capture the complexity of what it sees as the “multi-dimensional” nature of poverty.

### **3. Wide Range**

This is a wide ranging study. It draws heavily on the analyses of the “*Caritas* National Experts” across the EU.

### **4. Key Areas Covered – The Main Body of the Report**

- Participation and Capacity Building
- The Innovation and Impact of the Design Process
- An Assessment of the Social Vision
- Some Reflections on the Broader Possible Contribution of the National Strategy Process to the European Vision

## **5. Additional Case Studies - Appendices**

The appendices feature country by country feedback on (i) process (ii) content and (iii) coherence and quality.

## **6. Key Findings**

For ease of reading we do not list the key findings here directly as they are in the report. The main body of the report is worth reading given the feedback from the *Caritas* federation. Its full impact cannot be condensed. However, to summarise:

### **A. When The National Strategy Process Struggles It Can “Reduce Capacity” in Civil Society**

The European Commission has an excellent “Voluntary Planning Tool” but this has not been used very often. Some governments have not actively consulted civil society, others have consulted at such speed that it has had the effect of over-stretching smaller federations or of making larger ones feel “de-motivated”. In several countries the civil society process clearly identified a number of priorities but none of these were included in the strategies. This can be frustrating.

A repeated theme was a mismatch between IT and web based skills and resources used for consultation at the government level and those at regional and local levels – most especially with regard to having poorer peoples’ voices included in the policy design process.

In short, when consultation is done “badly” it undermines its own aims and may risk doing lasting damage.

### **B. Government Responses Can Help – In Various Ways**

There are however examples of excellent government practice and wide ranging civil society participation. When government action has been led by Ministers or civil servants that have taken a step into new territory the response from civil society has been reciprocal.

On a positive note *Caritas* thinks that civil society participants help reduce lack of information flow between government departments, and from the national to European level (and vice versa). This positive trend needs to be developed and backed with more sustainable European level funding.

### **C. There Are Some Very Important Omissions**

The report describes how *Caritas* views the total omission of the needs of migrants from four national strategies as “an appalling omission”. Their lack of coherent mention in all but six further strategies is a cause of grave concern for the future.

The report also names other areas as being omitted in many cases, namely mental health, income poverty and many aspects of homelessness.

## **D. Targets and Priorities**

In several cases no targets or budgets are attached to the expressed desires of the NSR. There has been little parliamentary debate. This has meant that in many cases the new “streamlined” process has had a double effect: firstly, it has focused minds bringing new allies on board. Nevertheless, secondly, it has had an impact of excluding many vital issues which form part of the harsh social reality that many member states experience.

Our comments about a policy matrix (below) flow from this analysis.

## **E. European Dimension**

Given the importance of Europe’s social dimension it remains a concern that “agriculture dominates so many perceptions”. The social dimension is vital.

Many national strategy design processes did not make explicit that they were part of a European process. This left the feeling that they were “national actions” only.

The exception to this general rule was when (i) a Minister tried to use the national strategy process as a “European policy that we have to adopt” thus securing political cover from Europe because of a national perception that European activities were not flexible and (ii) where local participants had had previous success at securing EC funds and hoped that the current process would add new resources to their nation later. We called this “policy entrepreneurship”.

## **7. Recommendations**

### **➤ Towards a policy matrix for priorities**

In order to respond much more closely to local social realities, we suggest that the European Commission should agree a “policy matrix” with member states. Rather as the Commission has established pan –EU criteria for the allocation of social funds, a new agreement is needed that can:

- (i) Help member states to debate the social reality at the start of the design process;
- (ii) Begin to set priorities against a range of “matrixed” EU indicators so that the social reality in that particular country can form the three or four priorities chosen rather than what *Caritas* members see as a simplistic choice of “employment” or existing policies in “new clothes”.

### **➤ Information sharing – the budget**

While third sector organisations did not want to reduce participation issues to a solely monetary value, information sharing about resources was considered to be the single most vital “missing link” in several cases. Design processes without reference to budgetary limitations or plans with no costing can add to confusion and disempowerment. EC guidance should emphasise the communication of budgetary possibilities.

- **Explicit guidance from the European Commission** on minimum consultation periods and involvement strategies is needed. At the least this could take the form of an agreed “best practice” case study approach or a very positive attempt to give the European Commission’s “*Voluntary Planning Tool*” a higher status.
- **Longer term funding of the European level networks.**  
In addition to the positive benefits outlined below with regard to strengthening the European Dimension, this would enable civil society to play an “early warning” role for national organisations and act as a more considerable resource in supporting national offices and their regional outreach.

A three-year “compact” approach would have more “traction” here than annualised agreements.

Again such funding should include the development of best practice case studies.

- **Enhancing integration with other initiatives.** For *Caritas Europa* poverty is multi-dimensional and so cross-cutting communication is critical. The development of a “single portal” - an open source web resource – by which social networks can communicate within and between countries, between departmental agendas, and within and between civil society networks may be one cost-effective means to achieve this. Resources for training key civil society networks in web-consultation techniques and IT skills would be another important aspect.
- **Development of civil society participation indicators and procedures** – In this study we have attempted to develop a framework that we have called European Public Value. A shared and generally adopted “beyond profit” framework would enhance analysis of the role and potential of the national strategy processes and outcomes. This could be the subject of an EU high level seminar. Alternatively, resources could be devoted to the further development of such a new matrix by one of the NGO networks.

#### ➤ **Building the European Dimension**

Sustainable funding for the social networks at the European level is critical. Three-year “compact” agreements with pan –EU networks including sustained resources to help them build “European Focused Capacity” in their national level offices would have a major impact.

Funding should be made available for a pilot “cross-sectoral network of networks” to help with raising the European profile in spheres that have been less engaged such as local government and health federations.

The European Commission should review support for European studies. This might include some financial incentives to mainstream a stronger awareness of national strategies / Lisbon Strategy in non-traditional civil society and policy-maker training.

## **Conclusion**

This section summarises a rich but short report with extensive appendices. We commend it to the European Commission, arising as it does from the insights of one of the EU’s most extensive and locally recognised networks.

# Section One: Background to the Study

## 1. Introduction

The great French social activist, Abbe Pierre, once said that “to ask for ones own bread is materialism but to fight for the bread of others is the beginning of spirituality”. Across Europe this has been the expressed motivating force behind the Catholic Church’s work in health, social care, and social services provision. It has also inspired an increasing advocacy with, and for, the continent’s poorest citizens.

*Caritas Europa* is the umbrella body of national *Caritas* member organisations. These members comprise national organisations in every member state including those that have recently joined the EU. Its membership also includes national organisations in those countries which are currently in negotiations with the European Commission about potential membership, and those countries which find themselves on the borders of the Union. From these national offices stretch, in varying ways, networks of regional and local activity which form one of Europe’s largest third sector presences.

Given such a significant contribution to European life, *Caritas Europa* has been – and is - committed and inspired to take part in the civil society process of the preparation and design of the Member States’ National Action Plans on Social Inclusion and the wider National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion. *Caritas Europa* now remains committed to monitor their subsequent implementation and success. Along with other civil society networks, and in partnership with the European Commission, it is convinced that the NSR form one key platform by which the social dimension of Europe can be affirmed and enhanced. This is fundamental because for *Caritas Europa* the social dimension of Europe is at the heart of a true understanding of the human person as well as the ultimate purpose of the European project.

## 2. The Scope of the Report

This is the first part of a three-part programme of work, reflection and analysis on the European Community’s (EC) Social Inclusion process which has been agreed between *Caritas Europa* and the Von Hügel Institute. This report records *Caritas Europa*’s initial insights into the quality and effectiveness of the design of the national strategies. It is intended to provide fresh analysis - based on feedback from member organisations - for consideration by the Ministers of Social Affairs, the European Commission and *Caritas Europa*’s partners in the wider voluntary sector. The Von Hügel Institute will also prepare a second report which will link these first insights - which are concentrated on design and quality – to further *Caritas Europa* analyses of the implementation of the strategies. This second phase is integral to the first. This is partly because implementation of any strategy becomes the acid test by which policy visions can be benchmarked in practice. Also, because, as we shall see in subsequent sections, the NSR are, for *Caritas Europa*, as remarkable for what they have excluded as for what they have included.

In pursuit of a clear framework of analysis we have used a variation of the “public value” social matrix which makes a clear link in strategic thinking and action between vision, third sector capacity building, operational design and implementation. Without a vision people may perish. But without engagement and action they may be as exposed.

The third “output” from this process of critical reflection will be a series of journalistic case studies of some of the best examples of *Caritas* members’ engagement with the European Social Inclusion process. These will be further combined with case studies of *Caritas Europa*’s pan European contribution to this work, and in other fields. Together they will form the basis of a book which will be published in early 2008. As such it is our intention, by the end of 2007, to provide a full assessment of the NAP/NSR linking the strategies to implementation and a further publication that will inspire ongoing interest in European approaches to anti-poverty work, both within the Catholic community and further afield.

### **3. The Form of This Study - A Note On Methodology**

The full study is based on a multiple entry case study approach. This applies to both this interim research and the final report. This method was chosen in order to be able to capture significant qualitative insight to reflect the huge variation in policy terrains that *Caritas*’ members experience from country to country. It is also used to enable the opening research to form the foundational insight of a year long enquiry which will inform the final report. This approach aims to test qualitative insights against other data from both the European and national levels.

The research team have used *Caritas Europa*’s exit assessment of the NSR at the end of CONCEPT 1. We have relied particularly heavily on the assessment of their national situation provided to us by representatives of *Caritas* member organisations who served as experts in this study. This was secured both by qualitative interviews and further detailed questionnaire asking *Caritas* members to assess their national strategies against the EPV-*Caritas* Social Vision framework.

This study is the coming together of multiple national feedback. It continues towards the further “outputs”.

### **4. European Public Value (EPV) and The *Caritas* Social Vision**

*Caritas Europa* is a federation of national agencies with profound regional and local roots. Inspired by Catholic social teaching, its agencies are committed to the ultimate dignity of the human person and a preferential option for the poor. In touch with the weakest and most vulnerable members of European society *Caritas* members consequently believe that Europe’s social dimension is a vital and non-negotiable means by which to judge the current and potential effectiveness of any public policies that emerge from the regional, national and local level. The social dimension is also the main base from which to assess the economic and cultural dimensions of Europe.

With this in mind the research team have judged it important to establish more objectively the criteria by which *Caritas Europa*, comprising its members in the EU and beyond, can assess current national strategies and their future implementation.

Upon reflection, and in the context of ongoing insights gained from *Caritas*’ involvement in the CONCEPT process, the research team have assessed the NAPs/NSR against what we have called “European Public Value” (EPV). This framework is also an attempt to react to the frustration of *Caritas* members with an excessively “economic” idea of poverty which *Caritas* sees as “much more multi-dimensional”.

EPV builds on the work of Professor Mark Moore at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. He argues that the social sector in general, and the voluntary sector in particular, needs a new matrix. Such a matrix needs to work “beyond profit” and measure the “public value added” of policy. This is contrasted with the narrow financial measures emphasised in the classical Anglo-Saxon model of “shareholder value”.

Moore’s work has been adapted for the European context by academics in the English regions and in the Nordic countries and by public and voluntary sector practitioners in the new accession countries among others.

## **EPV**

Building on a more social approach to “public value” we have developed a framework which seeks to ask:

- To what extent has the NAP/NSR process empowered civil society and built its capacity?
- To what extent has the NAP/NSR process led to new governance coalitions being formed?
- To what extent has the NAP/NSR process led to innovation or the potential for public policy and/or civil society innovation?

Because we also wanted to test the NAP/NSR process against *Caritas Europa*’s powerful social vision we combined these three questions with the following principles regarded as key by *Caritas Europa* members:

- A rights-based welfare system;
- A welfare system that should be sustainable and funded not only from income taxes, but also by the reduction of tax evasion and an increase in corporate taxation;
- That education should be free, as of right, until the age of majority;
- That access to social, political cultural and economic participation and decision-making should be a basic right and that information and resources be freely available to inform such participation in member states;
- That dialogue between the public, private and voluntary sectors should be a habit at the heart of society;
- That public policy and third sector priorities should have a “preferential option for the poor”.

We call this approach “*European Public Value*” (*EPV*), applying to the social dimension of Europe a fresh model for assessing the EC policy process.

## 5. Key Research Questions

At this stage of the study our aim was to answer two research questions.

From the perspective of *Caritas* members across Europe:

- Did the national Social Inclusion process add European Public Value in terms of social and policy innovation, civil society participation and the development of new governance networks?
- Do the NAPs/NSR meet the EPV-*Caritas* Social Vision standards for the social dimension of Europe?

## Section Two: The Broader Vision

### 6. A Word on the European Dimension

In most EU member states significant parts of policy making are integrated into the national policy making process. In some member states this integration may not be as advanced. In either case, at the local level, the interdependency of policy making at the European level and the national level may not be fully appreciated by the majority of European citizens.

While not forming part of the core analytical framework for the national strategies we judged it important for *Caritas Europa's* partner, the European Commission, to get some insight into the perceived recognition of the European inspiration behind the NAP/NSR process. For example: where there was significant civil society awareness was there a strong understanding that the work in hand had a European level inspiration? Where the preparation of the national strategy was more closely held at the elite national level, what role did the European perspective play there? In what situations were civil society participants linked or motivated in any way by an awareness of the Lisbon Agenda and/or by a European perspective?

The answers we have uncovered are of significance for all third sector umbrella groups active at the European level. They also provide a basis from which the European Commission and Parliament might refresh and renew debates about political legitimisation, the popular image of the European project, the potential for the future of a European Constitution, the following of the Lisbon Agenda and the reality of the European policy process.

#### 6.1 Policy Entrepreneurship and Political Cover

In some countries civil society participants in the national strategy design process were fully aware of a strongly expressed, or implicit, European motivation for taking the process seriously. And yet even here it would seem that motivations for “Europeanisation” might have been mixed.

One country reported that they had a long and successful track record of securing significant European level funding at the regional level. Consequently there is a strong public awareness that alongside purer motivations for involvement in any EU inspired process, there will be an element of “policy entrepreneurship”. This means that policy makers seek to maximise long-term budgetary returns from the European Commission resources. In another country, which had much more recently joined the EU, this entrepreneurship was reported to have taken a different form. In this country, a major national reform programme of welfare and other services was being initiated when the national Social Inclusion process began. The national *Caritas* agency was invited to be integrally involved in the strategy’s preparation but was less involved in the reform process:

*In our country we know that what the Commission demands has, in the end, to be accepted. We learnt this in the accession negotiations where the Commission pushed hard and the country had to accept. In this context the NAP became part of the means by which the relevant minister forced through certain changes that were not of the most popular nature. To help him take these relatively unpopular stands he invited European Commission*

*representatives to a number of meetings “to give the impression that some of them would be done on the demand of Brussels”.*

In summary, while in the first case Europe was acknowledged by civil society forces as a potential source of national funds, in the latter case it was the means by which political cover was provided for fundamental state reforms.

## **6.2 European Awareness and Elite Insights**

From our qualitative research and a brief survey of media headings in a small number of member states, it is clear that the national strategies for social inclusion have not reached the same level of national awareness as, for example, the Common Agricultural Policy or the Common Fisheries Policy. This is the case despite the fact that many more European citizens could be affected by the Social Inclusion and Social Protection policies adopted under the EC framework of the Open Method of Coordination. Indeed, the representative from *Caritas France* commented:

*Most people associate the EU and EC with only agriculture and regulation; they regard social policy as a national function.*

In the few countries (Belgium, Sweden and UK) where people living in poverty were involved in the national strategy consultation process there was a general feeling or awareness that they were participating in a *national* rather than a European process. Even where the EC was involved in funding participation programmes there was only a very vague sense that Europe was giving a helping hand.

NGOs and national coalitions of NGOs that were involved were of course aware of the European dimension of the process. However these NGOs could be the subject of elite choice. This means that many excellent organisations were not called to be part of the process. For example, in Lithuania there are about 2,000 NGOs but only two representatives of a network uniting 16 NGOs participated in the NAP process. It follows that in member states there will be a number of civil society organisations concerned with social protection and anti-poverty activities that will be unaware of NSR, not to mention their European dimension. *Caritas Austria* expressed a common view among member organisations:

*In Austria social protection policies from national government are regarded as being more important than the NAP process.*

## **6.3 Benefits of Working at a European Level - CONCEPT**

The experts we interviewed from *Caritas* member organisations did though identify the following benefits from working with the CONCEPT programme and other initiatives run by other anti-poverty networks at a European level:

- It has enabled civil society bodies, especially those from the smaller and more recent member states, to engage in a political dialogue on social inclusion at a European level.
- It has allowed civil society to propose concrete measures at a European level;
- It has empowered civil society to highlight priority objectives;
- Combined this will strengthen the EU social dimension in the medium term.

## 6.4 Recommendations

Awareness of the European dimension of the national Social Inclusion strategies seems to rest with member state national governments and some selected social NGO networks. Many *Caritas* member organisations noted that in the planning and implementation of national strategies “local and regional authorities were and are likely to be marginalised”. Meanwhile, the involvement of these statutory authorities would increase awareness of the European social policy initiatives and “could make the implementation of strategies more likely to be a reality.” They would also help build a Europe which is fully in touch with its possibilities and aware of its current achievements.

In the view of the study’s participants greater awareness of Europe’s social dimension will only happen when there is a shift in general perception of what the EU is, and what it does.

We make three concrete recommendations based on the findings of the study:

- (i) Sustainable funding for the social networks at the European level is critical. Three-year “compact” agreements with pan –EU networks including sustained resources to help them build “European Capacity” in their national level offices would have a major impact.
- (ii) Funding should be made available for a pilot “cross-sectoral network of networks” to help with raising the European profile.
- (iii) The European Commission should review support for European studies. This might include some financial incentives to mainstream a stronger awareness of national strategies /Lisbon Strategy in non-traditional civil society and policy-maker training.

## Section Three: Participation and Capacity Building

There is a strong feeling among the majority of our experts that consultation and participation had greatly improved for the 2006 national Social Inclusion process compared to the previous one. In this sense the process has been very positive.

With this opening remark in mind we turn first to areas for improvement and then to areas of strengths upon which future successes can be built.

### 7. Participation and Civil Society

As part of this interim study it has been considered vital to assess the extent of civil society participation in the design of the national strategies. Firstly, the extent of civil society participation is key to our “European Public Value” framework. Secondly, it links powerfully with *Caritas*’ core commitment to the third sector. Thirdly, civil society participation is a prominent concern for the European Commission as part of both the streamlined process and the “feeding in/feeding out” approach.

Again our findings draw directly on *Caritas Europa* member organisations’ feedback.

#### 7.1 Challenges – Major Obstacles to Participation

The involvement of civil society in the design of the national strategies was highly variable in terms of its scope, form and impact. The single most important factor has been “communication”.

We illustrate this point by means of qualitative feedback not intending to criticise but in order, as we have said, that the European Commission and member states might have an evidence base from which improvements could be planned in the future.

##### 7.1.1 Unrealistic Deadlines

Insufficient time for national strategy development was an obstacle which negatively affected the capacity of almost all countries to engage civil society in the process. This reduced the breadth and quality of representation of the third sector. Moreover, this underlying difficulty was compounded by a number of further factors outlined below.

*The Ministry responsible for drawing the NAP asked for contributions right away, after supplying the organisations during the meeting with a huge amount of information which was new for them. We all had only about 10 days to come up with contributions. The final document was not presented – it was done, passed through the Council of Ministers and was sent to Brussels. We had to check on the Internet whether it was ready or not. Only weeks later we were informed by an official that it had been finished. [Luxembourg]*

*Lack of time was also a problem in the case of Estonia. Caritas Estonia was prepared for the process thanks to the CONCEPT project. Otherwise we would have missed the train, as the time given by the Ministry was very short. Of course, if the EC sent the information to the Ministry earlier and the Ministry passed it to the NGOs earlier, the results would have been*

*much better. We were sent the final draft about two days before it went to the government, so our comments would not have mattered anyway. [Estonia]*

*It was the same in Lithuania. The Ministry was sending out the documents, let's say on Wednesday asking to react by next Monday or Tuesday. For those organisations which are not used to participating in such processes it was impossible to respond. [Lithuania]*

*Another problem was lack of time both for NGOs to react and for the Ministry to develop the document, to disseminate information and to organise the process. Effectively, the Ministry said that 'it was EU's fault' that they all had so little time. [Latvia]*

### **7.1.2 Lack of Government Outreach / Sectoral Innovation**

We are aware that across the EU there are varying constitutional and juridical arrangements which more or less formally or informally define the relationship between the third sector and the state. While we have found that close integration of civil society into social partnership councils or the like can have tremendously beneficial effects we have also discovered that these arrangements can have an inadvertent “excluding” effect on key third sector voices.

So, in some instances “deep” civil society engagement was sidestepped because of an expressed (and actual) formal partnership. In others “deep” participation was avoided by the combination of this kind of national partnership alongside a government’s view that “time was too pressing”.

Many respondents reported a mismatch between government’s IT and web capacity and similar resources in civil society. This meant that self declared government openness could inadvertently have the reverse effect.

These patterns led, in many cases, to huge gaps in information flows on a wide scale and the exclusion of voices that *Caritas Europa* would see as key:

*I think NGOs were not interested because they did not have enough information about the process. In our case there was no public information available. Therefore many NGOs which are operating outside big cities did not participate. [Lithuania]*

*There was no information from the Ministry about the process. We had to go to the Ministry and go from office to office trying to get answers. Even now the report is still not published on the Ministry’ website. Neither is there a Bulgarian version on the EC website. [Bulgaria]*

*In Latvia’s case it was the Ministry of Welfare (responsible for the NAP) which decided to invite only several NGOs that ‘had been actively involved in other similar processes’. Of course, it was easier for the Ministry to invite those they already knew. Formally, the Ministry could always argue that information was available to all potentially interested NGOs on its web page. In theory, they could participate but who is checking Ministry’s website regularly? [Latvia]*

*The Ministry invited one organisation. It is a very small organisation but it already had a relationship with the Ministry and that’s why it got involved. Also, the working group included two representatives on the newly formed network of NGOs which currently unites only 16 organisations. [Lithuania]*

### 7.1.3 Lack of Clarity and Civil Society Traction in the Process

It is a major finding from our study that the European Commission's funding of civil society networks has begun to make an impact on the engagement of civil society at the national and regional level. This engagement in all our experts' view increases the clarity of participation and communication. However, this funding needs to be more long term and have wider reach. We have touched on this in Section Two in terms of its contribution to the "wider vision". Here we return to it from a different perspective.

We have established, in many cases, a complete failure of responsible government bodies to explain the relationship between the European and national strategies, the structure of the process and the potential role the NGOs could play in it. In a world where evidence based policy is now the norm this failure of information sharing has potentially profound effects on the quality of participation and – ultimately – policy. Where the EU network partners have been strongest though it seems that this national failure has at least been mitigated.

*In terms of weaknesses of the process, we had only two or even one meeting where the streamlined process was explained. While we at Caritas Luxembourg were familiar with the process thanks to our links with the European level, for most other members of the group it was a new land, therefore they couldn't react properly. The latter claimed that the process was too complicated for them - they didn't see the interest to make an active contribution, as they didn't understand their role in the process. [Luxembourg]*

*These documents use very official, artificial, "Brussels language". Therefore it was difficult for potentially interested organisations to understand how they could get involved and the impact they could make. [Lithuania]*

*Some NGOs have no capability to take part in the process because they do not know the European strategies and how they can influence national policies. [Italy]*

*We had a reform process, yes, in which many were involved but then for the NAP civil society was almost by-passed even though we were pulled into the centre of the process. [Slovenia]*

### 7.1.4 The Risk of De-motivation

When understanding was limited we found that the fast timetables and lack of national information sharing could actually "de-motivate" at a rapid rate. This seems to suggest that the national strategy process badly done can *reduce* third sector capacity as much as it can *increase* capacity when followed diligently.

Where there were problems the national strategy development process was characterised as:

- "Formal" and "elite"
- "Tokenistic"
- "Politically marginalising"
- "Demanding such intense work at such intense speed that it got in the way of service delivery priorities where civil society organisations are smaller."

*NGOs were invited but only the big ones made some contribution. One of the particular features in Italy was that the NAP table did not include social enterprises, i.e. it included only*

*the NGOs with the mission not directly related to service provision – for example, Caritas, EAPN and other organisations connected to European networks. Big service providers were in fact invited but they were not interested in participation in the NAP process, preferring to use their energy on getting the contracts to do the actual job. [Italy]*

*On the other hand, because the government had so much time pressure, they were not that eager to take into account our suggestions either. This significantly lowered the motivation of making an input. [Estonia]*

*It was quite a formal process. Maybe for this reason, in case of Latvia out of eight NGOs that were invited only three actually participated. Caritas Latvia did not take part because we joined the CONCEPT at a later stage. After reviewing the document developed by the Ministry, I can say that this is quite a ‘formal’ paper. Maybe that was one of the reasons some NGOs did not see the point of taking part in the process. [Latvia]*

*I think it is surely a formal paper in case of Italy. I would also call it ‘elite’ paper: some civil servants in the Ministry, especially those who worked on it, know this document very well. They hope that in the future this kind of process will be of greater interest to the whole civil society and to political circles. At the moment, we at Caritas together with other NGOs are trying to ‘invest’ in this elite – if we improve the quality of this kind of documents and processes, we believe that we can base our strategies on them. The problem is that every change in the majority of the government changes strategic approach to NGOs. For example, the right wing wants NGOs only to be providers of low cost services, while left wing regards them as possible partners and principal actors. So, we believe that processes like this may help us to achieve our goals and to establish our strategies. However, at the moment we see this document and the process as being mostly for the elite – high level civil servants and managers of big NGOs, not for the whole civil society. [Italy]*

## **7.2 European Public Value – The Positive Effects of Participation**

In the countries where (a) there was good up-linkage to the European level and/or (b) the process was relatively more grounded in information sharing and genuine dialogue the positive impacts increased significantly.

Key positive outcomes reported include:

- Engagement in the European level learning and sharing process helped to increase impact at the national level because of a wider familiarity with the European Social Inclusion process and Lisbon strategy;
- More wide ranging, deeper and – likely – longer lasting relationships were made across government and between civil society and government;
- Civil society’s knowledge capacity and competence was enhanced because of an encounter with political pressures and priority setting;
- Policy-maker learning and capacity was enhanced because, in some instances, civil servants had their first sustained encounters with the third sector.

### ***A Good Practice Example of Participation from Belgium***

Belgium is often quoted for its institutional setting whereby associations “where people living in poverty can express themselves” are given the floor in policy debates.

The process started with the publication in 1994 of a “General Report on Poverty”, which relied heavily on the work done by such associations, the main one being “ATD Fourth World”, an association founded in France many years ago by Fr. Joseph Wresinski.

This report, which officially acknowledged the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and mapped the situation in various areas such as education, housing and health, was followed by important institutional reforms resulting in the creation of a National Service for Fighting Poverty, Precariness and Social Exclusion.

This Service is closely linked with the non-discrimination administration and every two years issues follow-up reports to the 1994 General Report. It is also closely involved in the preparation of the National Strategic Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion.

Another feature of the Belgian system is the important role played by social partners (employers and trade unions) in all social policy processes, including the NAP process. Thanks to its involvement in representative structures of non-profit enterprises, *Caritas Belgium* also has the possibility to take part in this “upper” part of the participation process, albeit not in its own capacity.

### **7.3 Assessment of Civil Society Involvement – A Further Dimension**

Having reported our qualitative findings we now turn to *Caritas* members “scoring” of the civil society participation in the national strategy design process against a series of indicators (Table 1).

As one can see from the table, the average score across countries varies from 1.5 (Bulgaria) to 8.1 (UK) (out of possible 10). A relatively high level of civil society participation can also be noted in Ireland (6.9), Luxembourg (6.5) and Malta (6.4). It must be pointed out however that scores in these countries vary by indicators. In Ireland, despite a well-organised and wide-reaching process of the civil society involvement, its quality would have been better if there was a more effective dialogue and availability of feedback on the NGOs’ suggestions. In case of Malta the weakest points were the extent to which people with direct experience of poverty could get involved in the process, and the tight deadlines. The biggest weaknesses in the case of Luxembourg were the low number of priorities that NGOs could influence, and, likewise in Ireland, insufficient dialogue and lack of time.

It should be noted that the above mentioned weaknesses of civil society participation seem to apply to many of the surveyed countries, as suggested by the lowest average scores for individual indicators: 4.7 for involvement of people with direct experience of poverty and for availability of feedback, 5.1 for dialogue with the third sector, not to mention tight deadlines (4.3) and sufficiency of work group meetings (4.4). At the same time, *Caritas*’ involvement in the process received a rather high average score of 6.1, probably not least due to participation of its member organisations in the CONCEPT project.

**Table 1. Civil Society Participation Scoring by Countries**

	LV	IE	SI	RO	BG	EE	UK	IT	MT	SK	LU	DE	BE	Average score by indicator
<b>The extent of civil society involvement:</b>														
Breadth of representation: to what extent the country's third sector was represented in the process	3	8	4	3	2	5	9	3	7	5	6	8	7	5.4
The extent to which <i>Caritas</i> organisation was involved	N/A	9	7	4	2	9	1	8	8	2	9	8	6	6.1
The extent to which people with direct experience of poverty were involved	6	8	3	1	2	2	9	1	5	1	9	7	7	4.7
Breadth of impact: the number of NAP priorities NGOs were given the opportunity/ invited to influence	6	9	8	3	2	7	9	8	6	5	1	5	6	5.8
The extent to which NGOs could suggest new NAP priorities	N/A	9	3	5	2	4	9	7	7	5	9	5	5	5.8
<b>Process efficiency/ effectiveness:</b>														
Effectiveness of information dissemination / active invitation of all third sector organisations to take part in the NAP process	5	8	7	4	1	7	9	6	7	4	9	4	6	5.9
Time given to react/ develop suggestions	3	7	4	4	1	3	9	3	5	4	3	6	4	4.3
Sufficiency of the working group meetings (in terms of number, length, frequency, etc.)	3	6	2	4	1	7	9	3	6	3	5	4	4	4.4
Quality of the meetings – did they represent a two-way dialogue?	5	5	3	5	1	5	9	5	7	5	4	5	7	5.1
Use of other methods of communication with NGOs in the NAP development process (e-mail, telephone, website)	5	4	8	5	1	7	8	4	6	5	8	4	5	5.4
<b>Outcomes of participation:</b>														
The number of suggestions submitted by NGOs	N/A	Many	N/A	>20		30	>10	N/A	N/A	77 (total)	9		6	
The number of suggestions adopted	N/A	Few	N/A	<10		10	>2	2	N/A	52 (total)			7	
Availability of feedback on the NGOs' suggestions (whether in oral or written form)	N/A	3	5	3	1	5	8	2	6	5	9		5	4.7
<b>Average score by country</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>5.6</b>	

## 7.4 Enhancing European Public Value – Recommendations for Improvement

Based on the qualitative findings and the assessment of participation we developed the following recommendations on adding European public value through participation.

Detailed information on each country's successes and challenges in relation to participation can be found in Appendix B.

To build on the examples of good capacity building and to respond to the dangers of civil society de-motivation our experts' recommendations include:

### (i) Information sharing – the budget

While third sector organisations did not want to reduce participation issues to a solely monetary value, information sharing about resources was considered to be the single most vital “missing link” in several cases. Social Inclusion processes without reference to budgetary limitations or plans with no costing can add to confusion and disempowerment.

*One more improvement could be inclusion of the budget – The Italian NAP has no budget section, unlike for example the Spanish one. So, we are talking about measures without knowing how much money we have for implementing them. Let's say we can suggest minimum income for all which would require €4 billion, while total social expenditure in Italy is only €1.5 billion. The problem is that all expenditure must be confirmed in the budget law, and the budget law is not related to this kind of process. [Italy]*

### (ii) Explicit guidance from the European Commission

It is important that the European Commission should negotiate minimum consultation periods and involvement strategies. At the least this could take the form of an agreed “best practice” case study approach or a very positive attempt to give the European Commission's “Voluntary Planning Tool” a higher status.

*The EC could provide some time guidelines – let's say at least two weeks to submit comments. Another suggestion – NGOs' input should be always described in the annex of the NAP. [Latvia]*

*We suggested to the ministry using the framework provided by the European Commission - the “Voluntary Planning Tool”. It is very useful and easy to use framework, and we suggested several times to use it for proposing and programming new political measures. One of the problems in Italy is lack of a unified logical framework for social policy relating various interconnected factors. [Italy]*

**(iii) Longer term funding of the European level networks.** In addition to the positive benefits outlined in Section 7.2 this would enable them to play an “early warning” role for national organisations and act as a more considerable resource in supporting national offices and their regional outreach. Again such funding should include the development of best practice case studies.

*If this process is very important for civil society maybe the European Commission could provide some support and organise some campaign informing about the fact that such document is going to be developed. Maybe something in the media, so that society and all NGOs could hear about it. [Latvia]*

*The campaign should show that this exercise is useful and that it should benefit the most vulnerable, that it's not only a rhetorical exercise. [Luxembourg]*

**(iv) Enhancing integration with other initiatives.** For *Caritas Europa* poverty is multi-dimensional and so cross-cutting communication is critical. The development of a “single portal” - an open source web resource – by which social networks can communicate within and between countries, between departmental agendas, and within and between civil society networks may be one cost-effective means to achieve this. Resources for training key civil society networks in web –alert, web-consultation and IT skills would be another important aspect.

**(iv) Development of civil society participation indicators and procedures.** In this study we have attempted to develop a framework that we have called European Public Value. A shared and generally adopted “beyond profit” framework would enhance analysis of the role and potential of the national strategy processes and outcomes.

*Maybe the European Commission should develop some comparable indicators to measure the quality of civil society participation at the national level. This would help governments understand how participation should work and what quality is expected. Also, it would enable us to put more pressure at the national level. [Italy]*

## Section Four: Innovation and Impact

### 8. Impact, Policy Design and Innovation

Increasingly and especially in the light of what has been called “the new public management” or the “new steering” there have been attempts to increase the “rationality” of policy making in many member states. In some quarters this has gone hand in hand with a fascination with policy “innovation”, “new direction-ing” and “step change” approaches to policy “invention”. *Caritas* recognises that the related development of “evidence based policy” can be useful especially in a Europe where resources can be scarce due to increasing global competition.

However, our research shows with some clarity that “innovation” may be being chased in some quarters at the expense of the need for “improvement”. It may also be sought at the expense of “depth”. Newness is an insufficient arbiter of justice. Moreover, “evidence” may also be harnessed to exclude from discussion some of what *Caritas* judges to be the most compelling needs in European society.

It is worth mentioning the UK as an example of good practice in terms of the quality of its civil society approaches to the design of the NAP. Nevertheless, the national strategy that has emerged presents existing policies as innovative ones. It is of concern that the bulk of the findings and ideas generated from civil society in general, and the “Get Heard” process in particular have been relegated to an appendix of the main report. Civil society’s engagement has to be paralleled with a firm commitment from government to consider and, where possible, to translate ideas and views emerging from participatory processes into policy.

When this happens, the positive idea of participation is undermined. “It de-motivates civil society organisations”.

*As far as I know, in most countries NAPs were based on other national strategies with their own budget. [Lithuania]*

*Yes, there was quite a bit of overlapping and for this reason NAPs could not be very innovative. [Latvia]*

Moreover, it is not only in Ireland that no clear outcomes have been defined against which implementation has been measured. Thus, while the new social partnership structure is to be applauded, its benefits risk being unquantifiable. Meanwhile, France’s new national budgeting structure, which allocates anti-poverty resources both horizontally and vertically through departments, is similarly laudable. But did these innovations emerge from the NAP process? And do any gains risk being lost altogether if they have no common basis for measurement?

With this in mind we now turn to a positive contribution that *Caritas Europa* wishes to make in this debate.

## Section Five: Testing the Social Vision

### 9. A Question of Priorities

We have described *Caritas* members' assessment of the NAPs/NSR. What we have not described however is the level of frustration that civil society organisations felt with regard to attempts to include policy fields and social issues that reflected "the social reality" of their country and which got beyond very narrow approaches. In this way National Action Plans on Social Inclusion have, in some sense, become vehicles for the very exclusion that they should seek to combat. As such the narrowing of focus in the streamlined process greatly risks compounding poverty in its multi-dimensional forms rather than profoundly encouraging fresh analysis and action by member states.

The guidance from the European Commission was interpreted in many countries as being focused on work and employment issues. Perhaps for this reason in 24 out of the 27 National Strategic Reports employment was identified as a key priority. While this may be a key tool by which to escape chronic and stable welfare dependency, it is not, according to *Caritas* members, the sole means by which to secure an inclusion process. Indeed there is a suspicion that possibly only three member states have managed to even think beyond an anti-poverty approach focused on employment.

In the view of the *Caritas* members we interviewed, those in work still have to pay attention to the relationship between income, costs and work/life balance. They also need focused solidarity when it comes to the nature of work: migrants may be at work but, even if European citizens, may have to endure hourly pay at anything, for example, down to 70% of the legal minimum wage in the UK. Women in the Baltic states who find themselves in the sex industry and then being trafficked to the wealthiest European nations are "at work" too as are those in more recent accession countries who work well beyond typical European retirement ages because of concerns about pension provision.

In addition to these general concerns we asked specifically which important areas had been strongly emphasised by civil society but had not been included in any set of priorities.

#### 9.1 Income Poverty

Germany and Ireland pointed out that the issue of income poverty had not been adequately addressed. Ireland commented:

*Sixty percent of those at risk of poverty do not live in households headed by a person in the labour force (which includes unemployed people). They live in households headed by people who are elderly, ill or have a disability or are in a caring role. The NAP does not address this issue. Twenty five percent of all those at risk of poverty in Ireland are employed – these are the working poor.*

*Caritas Austria* shared similar concerns about the income levels of those on state benefit:

*Sozialhilfe, the lowest social safety net, is for people who are not entitled to benefits from the social insurance system. The benefits they receive are not high enough for living. Also,*

*a person who receives Sozialhilfe has no chance of getting a job or even a subsidy to help them reach job readiness.*

## **9.2 Housing and Homelessness**

Affordable housing, or lack of it, was only highlighted as a priority in six countries.

In Latvia homelessness was a problem identified by the NGOs but it was not mentioned in the NSR. The Ministry's "excuse" for this omission was that NSR is a "national document dealing with national issues." Since homelessness is highly concentrated in the capital it was not presented as a "challenge to the nation". Latvia did however include in the NAP the problem of housing for elderly low-income people.

*Caritas Luxembourg* noted that "homeless people face big problems in Luxembourg due to very expensive housing". However this issue was not addressed in the NAP despite being debated during the NAP design process.

In Italy homelessness and housing were key areas of concern for NGOs, but these issues were not adequately discussed in the NAP process. As a partial response the ministries thought it necessary to include a national assessment on homelessness as part of the process in order to improve their evidence base. However, NGOs think this will not include the most excluded.

## **9.3 Mental Health**

In Malta mental health problems were highlighted in consultation but excluded from the NSR, finding only a cursory mention in an annex. In Slovenia there were also debates among NGOs about comprehensive policies towards the mentally ill, but these ideas did not appear in the NAP.

The range of "missing topics" also touches other areas such as disability, domestic violence, health inequalities and the integration of ex-prisoners back into society.

## **9.4 Lack of Measurable Targets**

Despite the European Commission guidelines indicating that targets must be specific and measurable, a number of national strategies lacked measurable targets. In Ireland this is a source of particular frustration because the matter has been raised repeatedly.

*Caritas Italy* commented:

*We are talking about child poverty but we do not know how to measure it. In our contribution Caritas Italy along with two other NGOs suggested including specific indicators and intermediate targets according to EU guidelines. However this suggestion was not adopted by the government.*

Other respondents suggested that the lack of indicators might partly be caused by the fact that working in the context of the Open Method of Coordination did not lay down such

strict guidelines. For example, in the employment section of the Luxembourg NAP it is claimed that targets cannot be set because the situation is too complex, so it was decided not to set targets for a return to full employment. *Caritas Luxembourg* representative commented: “we think targets should be set – this is a weakness of the OMC in the area of social inclusion.”

Thus, the number of policy areas that *Caritas* members see as very important to their particular social realities is large and needs an increasingly shared and measurable baseline for action. This raises the question as to how the European Commission and member state governments might be persuaded to broaden their understanding of the intrinsic potential for social innovation, capacity building and an increasingly strong social dimension that is bound up in the national strategy design process. If this issue is not addressed, the national strategies risk adding much less European Public Value than they are able to. In fact their design could become merely a tick box exercise at an elite level rather than a process which can refresh and renew a social Europe.

### **9.5 An Appalling Omission – Migrants and Itinerant Peoples**

Migration is now a core experience of the European social reality. This is so in terms of migration between EU member states and its impact on public services, and in the powerful racism that can be experienced by such migrants (and other itinerant or national minorities such as the Roma).

Significantly, migration is increasingly becoming a form of international encounter for the European Union: while the EU does not have full formal foreign policy powers its informal diplomatic reach is broadened hugely now that, according to the World Bank, the majority of East European migrants are making their way to Russia and to the United States of America. The role of remittances from these migrants is also vital for countries that long to join the EU and its poorer member states.

However, at the core of *Caritas Europa*'s social vision is a preferential option for the poor. It is among migrant communities that these poorest of European citizens and guests can be found today.

One judgement as to how a preferential option for the poor can be tested is the manner in which it gives voice and access to decision-making and basic social welfare rights to the weakest. The Papal letter *Erga Migrantes* notes this further and calls for a pastoral and policy approach of “welcome” in the EU and wider afield to those who are migrants or itinerant.

“The needs of migrants in and around Europe are the great moral challenge for us all” said one *Caritas* representative from the Nordic countries “and yet it is a scandal that the NAP process and the related Lisbon strategies do not seem to register the human misery at the heart of many migrant lives...and which currently constitute the dark side of the European economic project”.

“We are very over stretched with our work with new migrants” said the Director of *Caritas Greece*. “This is a big problem,” reported Italy and Spain. “In the Baltic States we are greatly concerned about the increasing levels of trafficking of our women, and women from neighbouring states, for use in sex and other high risk trades,” said another *Caritas*

representative. “In Ireland we have been so concerned that we commissioned our own major study on the topic and are working hard to keep the matter near the top of the agenda”. In Cyprus, *Caritas* focuses most of its effort on work with migrants and refugees.

And yet our experts see the national strategies as having clearly failed in this respect. It is only in six member states that the issue of the needs of migrants and itinerant peoples is included as a policy priority while some others only mentioned the issue in passing or as a cross cutting issue. In the *Caritas*’ view even the countries that included migration in the NAPs as a priority had not treated it adequately.

Even more concerning is the total absence of any mention of migration in the NAPs of United Kingdom, Hungary, Latvia and Slovenia. In the view of our experts this is a serious gap, even an “appalling omission”.

“In the UK a recent report has revealed that migrant workers face massive vulnerability, illegal levels of wages and are made to work illegal numbers of hours. This included 30% of the surveyed European citizens reporting that they were paid less than the legal minimum UK wage. Among the Latin American and African respondents the figure was higher still. Fascinatingly, in the London case, the more vulnerable the migrants are the more they turn to the Church and her agencies as the only institutions that they trust....With this social reality on our doorstep it is a scandal that the UK government consulted migrant voices in the NAP design but then excluded them from its contents...”

These stories are repeated country by country and are dealt with by *Caritas* at the parish level day by day.

In future member states should have to explain why they have excluded migration and migrant workers from their priorities given its huge European impact. The fully developed European Public Value framework would make such omissions, at the least, more transparent.

### ***Caritas Graz – A Case Study Included in the Austrian National Strategy***

In September 2001 an outreach service was established, which once a week visits four different sites in Graz to reach the target groups. The Marienambulanz is also linked with a network of 21 physicians, specialists, outpatient departments and laboratories that provide additional help. The Marienambulanz has been implemented on the basis of the demand analysis within the facilities of the *Caritas Graz*.

This analysis revealed that members of marginalised groups including drug users often have inhibitions in consulting physicians about health problems, even in instances when they are covered by health insurance. There are several reasons which make the access to medical treatment difficult for them: homelessness, difficulties to adhere to the opening times, an unclear state of social insurance, as well as negative experiences with the health system. For these reasons this target group seriously lacks primary health care which is extremely important in case of acute health problems (e.g. wound treatment) as well as diagnoses and treatment of drug-related chronic diseases (e.g. Hepatitis C). The physical well-being and health plays a major role also in the context of social integration of drug users. Many refugees and migrants use the services of this project.

## **9.6 Improving Priority Setting – Towards a Policy Matrix Approach**

Without wishing to propose too complicated a framework it would seem that a weighted matrix could be designed which would enable countries to undertake needs assessments from within a common approach.

In some EC schemes the allocation of resources is linked to a nation's performance against a range of "mean" indicators. *Caritas Europa* members would welcome the introduction of a flexible matrix with common public value and economic indicators that would enable governments to reflect more deeply at the outset of civil society participation and wider consultation. This would allow the possibility of adapting the National Action Plans more closely to the local social reality rather than focusing on a very limited range of policy fields and options. This should not be interpreted as a means by which an infinite number of issues might be bundled into the NAP/NSR process. It should instead be understood as an attempt to find a way towards priority setting which truly reflects the principle of subsidiarity on the one hand, and the enhancement of the feeding in /feeding out process at several levels on the other.

## **10. Implementation**

We have described the challenges and strengths of the national strategy design process. We have shown the hope that some of the planned actions inspire and the frustrations that the exclusion of some very vulnerable people can provoke. We have also noted that short government turnaround schedules can have the most disempowering of effects.

The key challenge now will be the implementation of the strategies as they have been written. The final *Caritas Europa* report from the Von Hügel Institute will assess the first year of such implementation.

## **11. Conclusion**

This report set out to be an interim but fresh analysis of the civil society response to the NAP/NSR process. It forms a part of three publications which will include the *Caritas Europa* Final Report on CONCEPT.

Unsurprisingly, we have recorded significant variation across the member states. This variety is driven both by varying state approaches and contrasting constitutional settlements. It is also effected by the different scales of involvement with civil society across the EU. Consequently there have been some struggles in some countries to secure full civil society participation and impact and this is likely to have had an impact on the coherence of the NAPs/NSR.

Even so, we report major contributions by the *Caritas* members in particular and the wider civil society in general. This gives hope for the future and provides the context for the final *Caritas* report which will reflect particularly on implementation.

## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A: Reflections on NAPs' Contents**

Given *Caritas Europa*'s particular strengths in responding to the design of the National Action Plans in CONCEPT 1 we have included here some of our more detailed country by country feedback on this aspect of the national Social Inclusion process. This is intended to add qualitative flavour to the wider report.

### **Lack of Coherence:**

*The NAP was drawn by taking existing strategies and putting them together to compose the document. This is not the way to develop the plan. I do not mean to say that other strategies are not useful – they all address certain needs and people experiencing poverty are waiting for some intervention – but I want to point out that NAP is not a strategy in itself, it is a collection of strategies. We hoped that at the end of the process we would have something more coherent but it didn't happen, perhaps for political reasons and lack of capacity. [ITALY]*

*I think choosing the priorities for the NAP is a matter of political will. We have included the list of Caritas Social Vision principles at the beginning of our contribution saying to the government that our input is based on this vision. It was also our way of saying 'if you want to follow the rights-based approach you can explain to us how you are going to guarantee these rights based on this approach'. However, they mixed rights-based approach, needs-based approach and other approaches in the document thus lacking the focus. Therefore it is difficult to 'manage' our NAP based on the list of Caritas Social Vision principles. Yes, it includes themes of migration, poverty, rights to access some services which can be linked to our list but they have not been the result of using this CE approach. Maybe this framework is useful now for evaluating the policies, not the NAP, because in our case we have to monitor not the implementation of the NAP but implementation of several policies. In relation to what I said before, it may be the case that some social policies to be implemented by Italy are not in the NAP at the moment. Actually, the document is called National Strategic Report, so it is not the NAP for inclusion but neither it is a report on a strategy in our case. [ITALY]*

### **Selection of Priorities: Too Narrow Versus Too Broad, Exclusion of Certain Issues:**

*Although there is no budget allocated the working group selected three priorities, which can be regarded as innovative and good. The priorities in the Latvian NAP are quite narrow but under each priority there are tasks and indicators outlined. So maybe there is something innovative in the narrowness of the priorities. On the other hand, in terms of social principles they may seem too narrow, as we are talking about only three groups: youth, one-parent families at risk of poverty and pensioners. These are of course important target groups in Latvia also from Caritas' perspective but the list is not exhaustive. There is probably a trade-off between going too narrow but being more specific and between going too wide failing to focus. [LATVIA]*

*These priorities were Barcelona priorities, it was a political choice. I think they were broad enough for our purposes. I think what is important is having a good process of choice of the priorities shared with the civil society. Also, countries are not forbidden to include other priorities and allocate much more funds to fight exclusion in much broader ways. At the European level, however, I think it is necessary to focus, be precise and try to build a European social model following certain agreed priorities. To build such model we need more than abstract talk, we need to choose priorities, set specific targets and develop policies to be measured and evaluated. Of course, fighting homelessness in Italy and let's say in Latvia are probably two different things but having a common priority helps to understand common problems and to think of possible common European approaches and at the same time country-specific policies. I think choosing the priorities could be a 'pedagogical' process but this is not how it is managed at the moment. [ITALY]*

*In terms of excluding certain priorities, in our case it was the suggestion to include the issue of homelessness that was not accepted. The Ministry's excuse was that the NAP is of the national scope while only the capital city has homeless people, so it is municipality's responsibility to deal with this problem. Only the problem of housing for elderly people with low income is addressed in the Latvian NAP. [LATVIA]*

### **Lack of Needs-Driven Approach:**

*I think there are two possible ways of planning this document. First – what are the problems and how we are going to address them, second – how much money we have and how we are going to spend it to address the problems. Estonia's approach was to have the budget first which does not necessarily mean addressing the most pressing problems. [ESTONIA]*

*One of the problems in Italy was that the NAP was not built by identifying the needs and trying to respond to them with the strategies. The only issue addressed by the NAP that was not present before in discussions of different ministries is the necessity to have the national assessment of homelessness to find out how many homeless and what kind there are in Italy. [ITALY]*

*I think one of the weaknesses of NAPs in all countries was that they were made based on Brussels guidelines. They would have been more effective if Brussels asked to draw them according to the national situation. Common structure was a good idea but seven priorities were given to the countries to choose from. [LITHUANIA]*

### **Lack of Measurable Targets:**

*Despite guidelines indicating that targets must be specific and measurable, our NAP totally lacks them. For example, we are talking about child poverty but we do not know how to measure it. In our contribution Caritas Italiana and two other NGOs suggested including specific indicators and intermediate targets according to the EU guidelines. However this suggestion was not adopted by the government, as this seems to go against their culture and way of thinking. Maybe things will change in the future along with new governments coming to power. The Voluntary Planning Tool I mentioned would be very useful as helps to clearly structure the priorities, the measures and people in charge. [ITALY]*

*I think lack of indicators is partly caused by the fact that we are working in the context of Open National Co-ordination which is not that strict. For example, in the employment section of our NAP it is claimed that targets cannot be set because the situation is too complex. So it has been agreed the tri-partite and political level not to set national targets for return to full employment. I think the targets should be set - this is the weakness of the method of Open Co-ordination in the area of social inclusion. [LUXEMBOURG]*

### **Integrated Approach to Dealing With Social Issues:**

*We made a first step in the direction of integrating the efforts of different ministries to apply a more integrated approach to solving social problems. [ITALY]*

*In our case the potential is very good but not enough has been done so far in terms of integrated approach: education strategy is one thing, social strategy is the other, while this could be an opportunity to put them together, e.g. getting children back to school by helping their families to solve social problems. [ESTONIA]*

*Lack of integrated effort was one of the greatest weaknesses of our NAP. There was no negotiation between the ministries. Also, Ministry of Social Affairs can only play a secondary role in the areas of health and education, which creates certain tension between the ministries. [BULGARIA]*

*Several ministries were involved in the process. However, when it came to some really 'painful' issues, they tended to push responsibility onto each other. [LATVIA]*

*I think it will be the case that each ministry will be in charge of implementing a part of the NAP that it has developed. At the end each of them will severally submit reports on implementation. [LITHUANIA]*

### **Lack of Budget Behind the Policies:**

*To summarise, in case of Italy the greatest weaknesses of the NAP were that no budget was allocated and that no specific targets were set. [ITALY]*

*There was no budget allocated – when our Minister of Social Affairs made calculations of the funds needed for the next year, our Finance Minister almost had a stroke. [BULGARIA]*

## Appendix B: Civil Society Participation by Countries

The *Caritas Europa* network reaches down to neighbourhood level through parish structures in every member state. Consequently detailed feedback on a country-by-country basis provides additional means by which particular policy variations can be assessed. Here we record specific examples of learning from the participation process on the part of civil society.

### *Austria*

The Bundesländer, Gemeinde- and Städtevertreter as well as the social partners (employers and employees) were involved in the NAP process. When it comes to the third sector, this time only umbrella organisations of charities were invited to take part. Nevertheless the policy statement of *Caritas* was accepted. There was one event to inform the public about the NAP and one workshop to discuss the draft of the report. In addition to that, *Caritas Austria* received periodical information concerning the progress of the NAP development. In terms of monitoring of the NAP implementation, it is intended to involve the “Armutskonferenz”, an umbrella organisation where *Caritas Austria* is a member.

### *Belgium*

According to *Caritas* representatives, the latest NAP is much better than the previous document which was a collection of various government decisions and policies compiled to meet formal requirements. This time the process involved a significant number of people and resources. *Caritas en Belgique Francophone et Germanophone* was more involved in the process than *Caritas Flanders*. Out of 50 actors involved in the NAP process about 15 were NGOs that were specifically invited by the government because they were regarded as representing the interests of various socially excluded target groups most effectively.

The NAP process took off quite late and some meetings were announced at a very short notice or took place during the summer holidays. In total 4-5 meetings were held. Overall it was an open process, which enabled civil society to engage in an open discussion and to interact in the political process. Every chapter of the Flemish NAP was discussed with organisations where poor people ‘take the floor’ (so-called ‘experts in poverty’), and their comments were included into the document. While this is an example of good practice of civil society involvement, its downside is the constraints it creates on long-term planning. *Caritas Flanders* was happy with the degree of interaction and the reaction to their suggestions. However, from their point of view, the NAP could have devoted more attention to the migration issues.

*Caritas en Belgique Francophone et Germanophone* reports very poor process of feeding in/feeding-out with the NRP.

### *Bulgaria*

Civil society involvement in the NAP process was very low, partly explained by the weakness of voluntary sector destroyed during the communist era. At the same time the NAP process was very centralised with insufficient information available to the public. The NAP was

developed in a closed working group which included three to four, that regularly take part in the government's council on social policy. They were chosen by the government, but transparent criteria were not applied. These bodies included: are trade unions, child protection organisation, some associations and organisations which have connections with the administration and have worked with the government before.

After the NAP was finalised, *Caritas Bulgaria* was invited to discuss its implementation. *Caritas* will take part in implementation of measures on social inclusion, health care and long-term care. There was no encouragement of participation of other NGOs in the NAP implementation. Nor will civil society be involved in the monitoring of NAP implementation.

### ***Estonia***

Thirty voluntary sector organisations were involved in the NAP process, *Caritas Estonia* being the only faith-related organization. Others were NGOs: service providers, advocacy groups, professional unions, and academic and research organisations. In principle information about the process was available to all potentially interested organisations: *Caritas Estonia* sent the invitation to participate in the NAP process to the two major NGO sector mailing lists, and the information was available on the *Caritas* website.

There was one meeting of NGOs and three meetings of the NGOs with the Ministry of Social Affairs. The NGOs' meeting and the first meeting with the Ministry took place in June after the first draft of the NAP had been put together. The second bilateral meeting was held in August after the draft was almost finalised before sending it to the government, and the last meeting took place after the NAP had been submitted to draw conclusions and to discuss further plans. In-between these meetings, documents were sent out and comments submitted regularly.

*Caritas Estonia*, being the representative of NGOs in the leading committee, also took part in committee meetings and personal meetings in the Ministry. A lot of information was exchanged via e-mail, website and telephone. NGOs were given enough time (2-3 weeks) to make suggestions only at the first stage of the process. They had very little time to submit comments on the final draft. Many of NGOs' ideas were taken into account but they mainly focused on the problems rather than solutions. At the same time the dialogue was unbalanced – government decided which suggestions to use, and strategic decisions were often made without taking into account the NGO perspective.

The formalization of, and resource allocation for, civil society participation seems to remain the greatest challenge in Estonia. Currently participation in the process is based on voluntary (non-funded) effort. Civil society has been invited to take part in the monitoring process and *Caritas Estonia* will be actively involved.

### ***Germany***

In Germany, civil society was involved in the NAP process through 9 representatives:

- 2 representatives of the "Federal Association of Non-Statutory Welfare" (The Association unites six central organisations of Non-statutory Welfare: *Caritas*, Workers' Welfare Service, German Red Cross, Association for Non-Affiliated Charities, Welfare Services of the Protestant Church in Germany, and Central Welfare Agency of the Jews in Germany);

- 1 representative of the National Anti Poverty Network (currently a *Caritas* member);
- 1 representative of the *Länder* (North-Rhine-Westphalia);
- 1 representative of the trade union (employees);
- 1 representative of the Employers' Association;
- 1 representative of the Catholic Church;
- 1 representative of the Protestant Church;
- 1 academic.

This group met with the Ministry in February 2006 to discuss how Germany could transact the European guidelines. In May the Ministry held the event "FORTEIL", where they publicly presented the draft of the NAP which was open for discussion by 75 participants. However, the workshop was a rather formal procedure, lacking real dialogue.

After the meeting members of the group were asked to inform people they represented that they could provide position papers on the NAP. A joint position paper was developed by representatives of the Federal Association of Non-Statutory Welfare and the National Anti-Poverty Network. They had also submitted a paper before the meeting, in March 2006. Only some suggestions of the NGOs were included into the NAP document. No feedback on suggestions was provided.

The voluntary sector in Germany is strong and active but its potential was not used to the full. *Caritas Germany* would like to have had a more active involvement and more regular ongoing discussions. Civil society will not be involved in the NAP monitoring.

### *Greece*

This was the first time NGOs, including *Caritas Greece*, have been recognised and the first time that *Caritas* has been contacted by the government. However there was a feeling that NGOs' comments were not reflected in the NAP.

## *Ireland*

Ireland's situation is unique in terms of the current NAP being an interim report developed before the National Social Partnership Agreement (NSPA) for 2006-2015 was negotiated (just recently). The NSPA for the first time recognised that social and economic development are complementary processes.

Also, the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2007-2013 was published only on 23rd January 2007. Taking into account these documents, the final version of the NAP will be published on 21 February 2007.

Ireland has a unique social partnership consisting of 4 pillars: employers, unions, farming organisations and community and voluntary sector. In total, 17 third sector organisations were involved in the Social Partnership process. They represent 10 strands: older people, children and youth, labour market, housing, poverty, disability and caring, local and rural, housing, gender, social analysis and voluntary/network. The 17 organisations involved in the social partnership process played a very active part in the preparation of the NAP. So too did a wide range of other third sector organisations both national and local, including the biggest voluntary organisation representing poor people, who responded to Government's open invitation to participate in preparatory seminars and to make written submissions. The NAP (to be published on 21 February 2007) forms an integral part of the National Agreement covering 2006-2015.

The *Caritas* partner in Ireland, CORI Justice Commission, is the only organisation representing the social analysis strand. It is a key participant and influencer in the process, actively involved since 1996. It drew government's attention to the fact that the number of meta-strategies Ireland is following - NRP, Lisbon Strategy, National Development Plan, NSPA, National Spatial Strategy, NAP - are to some extent overlapping and therefore have to be properly integrated.

Overall, the *Caritas* partner in Ireland agrees that civil society involvement was reasonable and more effective than in many other countries. CORI JC will also now monitor the NAP implementation (this is a part of the Social Partnership Agreement).

## *Italy*

In Italy's case, an additional difficulty was the change of government that occurred during the NAP development period, which led to the lack of continuity in the NAP process. However *Caritas Italy* notes two positive changes compared to the previous NAP round. Firstly, NGOs have been recalled to the NAP table - the former government did not include NGOs into the process. Secondly, for the first time the NAP table included a large number of public administration bodies. Under the previous government there was not much integration between the ministries, but this time the working group included high level representatives from all six or seven ministries involved.

*Caritas Italy* is not aware of the number of NGOs that were invited to take part in the process. Four NGO federations were represented in the working group.

Two meetings were reserved for invited NGOs. The first meeting was held at the beginning of the process, which was as late as June. The second meeting took place when the first NSR draft was ready, in September. Meetings were closed to invitees only, and no information was available beyond this selected “club” of experts. Getting information was difficult even for group members if they had no personal contacts with one of the civil servants leading the process.

Another difficulty was insufficient time to develop suggestions, which meant that NGOs could only make short interventions and to request the final document. Only some suggestions made by trade unions were adopted. For example, there was no specific discussion about housing, although in many of the NGOs’ suggestions this was one of the key areas of concern. As a result, the NSR dedicates some attention to housing in the context of promoting inclusion, however without reference to the most excluded or homeless.

According to *Caritas Italy*, there was no real dialogue in the NAP development process, “it was a typical top-down, ‘deaf’ process”.

The NGOs that took part in the NAP discussions were told that their working group will be recalled to monitor the implementation, but no processes are scheduled at the moment. When the Ministry convenes the working group for monitoring, *Caritas* will be involved.

### *Latvia*

*Caritas Latvia* joined the CONCEPT at a later stage on a voluntary basis. It did not take part in the NAP process but is well informed about it via later meetings with the Ministry.

The Ministry of Welfare invited to the NAP working group NGOs which were active and had been previously involved in other policy development processes. Eight NGOs were invited but only three took part: those dealing with disabled people, Roma/ ethnic minorities, and social services. Also, the Association of Local Governments was involved in the working group.

The Working group meetings were open, and information about them was available on the Ministry’s website. In theory any organisation could join the process, however, in practice most NGOs are very small, mostly operate on voluntary basis and concentrate on the actual work with target groups rather than participating in policy making. There was only one working group meeting and according to the government this was because of time constraints. The NAP development was mainly based on already existing strategies, therefore the process was quite formal.

Overall, the involvement of NGOs in Latvia reflected the fact that the third sector is not very strong and as yet has not enough capacity for participation in policy development. Another de-motivating factor was the absence of funding behind the NAP which the government explained by the fact that the state budget had already been approved prior to NAP development.

*Caritas Latvia* will take part in the monitoring of the NAP implementation within the CONCEPT project.

## ***Lithuania***

The government invited to the NAP working group only two representatives of the NGO network dealing with poverty. (The Network unites about 16 NGOs where *Caritas* is member of the board). *Caritas* used one of the Network representatives to submit its suggestions regarding the NAP.

There was no information available to the public about the NAP process, which prevented other potentially interested NGOs from participation. The list of the working group members was not published either.

*Caritas'* suggestions, mostly related to elderly people, have been included into the NAP. However *Caritas* was not informed about how many suggestions from other NGOs were taken into account. It was up to the government to decide in the absence of a real dialogue.

Information about the NAP, once it has been finalised, was disseminated via conferences and other events that took place in the big cities. Only one civil society representative from each county are invited to these events.

Overall, civil society involvement could have been much more effective. On the other hand, NGOs are not very active in policy making as they mainly focus on their everyday work. This would normally also apply to *Caritas* but its participation in the CONCEPT meant it could join the NAP process

The Ministry will invite one representative of the NGOs network to take part in the monitoring of implementation. *Caritas* will be involved through the EAPN Lithuania.

## ***Luxembourg***

Drawing-up the NAP was the responsibility of the Ministry of Family and Integration. The Ministry has a NAP inclusion working group which is an advisory organ that has been functioning since 2001. However, it holds only two meetings annually. Local representatives / authorities, associations, chambers, etc. are only involved to some extent in the process because they find it 'too distant'.

*Caritas Luxembourg* is a confederation of 18 NGOs including service providers working with children, the disabled and elderly people, the homeless, the poor and other target groups. It had easy access to information and had informal and regular dialogue with the Ministry and with the civil servant in charge of the NAP monitoring, who is a member of the SPC.

Acting as an intermediary between the government and NGOs in the NAP process, *Caritas* invited its members to a meeting to explain the purpose of the NAP process and to discuss the issues to be included into the NAP. This consultation meeting which took place a couple of days before the working group meeting at the Ministry lasted about 1.5 hours. The meeting was attended by big service providers that organise day care facilities for children, emergency childcare, home care for elderly people and work with the homeless. Other NGOs did not attend due to scepticism, lack of motivation and ideas.

There was only one working group meeting at the Ministry. Group members were given seven working days to submit a proposal of a Priority Objective. *Caritas* submitted a proposal with specific policy measures, indicators, monitoring arrangements and resource allocation.

Three proposed policy measures were adopted. Although they were not completely new (have already been included in the previous NAP) but they have been retained in the current document.

Other proposals were submitted by the Red Cross, the Immigrant Workers Support Association, the EAPN Luxembourg and its member organisations, and the National Council of Women.

One of the difficulties in the case of Luxembourg was that proposals had to be submitted before the Priority Policy Objectives (PPOs) were agreed and announced. *Caritas* unsuccessfully demanded one more working group meeting to discuss the PPOs. As a result, NGOs had to suggest measures without knowing PPOs and to suggest PPOs without knowing which ones government had already selected. Working group members were given only a few days to comment on the final NAP draft.

Other members of the NAP working group were disappointed by the top down approach and the lack of real dialogue between NGOs and the government. No satisfactory answers were given by the government regarding the future participation of NGOs in the planning and monitoring process of the NAP.

### ***Malta***

*Caritas Malta* is a big NGO in Malta. It was asked to make two proposals for the NAP and regards the consultation as a good experience.

A National Consultative Seminar was held in January 2006 to discuss the contents of the report with a range of stakeholders that included social NGOs, civil servants and academics. The seminar was attended by about 500 people - representing the population being 500,000. The meeting was open to anyone who wanted to attend but there were no smaller workshops or follow up meetings. A questionnaire was circulated that anyone could fill in but it was overcomplicated. The lead person was a senior civil servant, and the Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity addressed this consultative seminar.

*Caritas Malta* is encouraged that government is getting NGOs involved in social policy. However, how exactly NGOs will be involved has not yet been addressed. There are numerous community-based organisations in Malta but there is no mention of how government will liaise with them although their importance is recognised.

Civil society, including social NGOs such as *Caritas Malta*, have not been approached by any governmental organisation to be involved in the monitoring of the NAP implementation. The process for civil society engagement, however, was an improvement compared to the first cycle of the NAP.

### ***Romania***

There was not enough time for a public debate or extensive consultation with NGOs in the NAP process. A meeting of a coalition of NGOs including *Caritas* was held. The NAP information was put on the Ministry's website but not in the Romanian language. Although there was big improvement on dialogue and participation but the government has still much to learn on how to communicate with NGOs and civil society. NGOs now seem to be valued by

government but not all of their proposals have been included into the NAP. *Caritas* works at a local level and so is able to participate with a knowledge of local conditions.

### *Slovakia*

While the previous NAP was developed by only two people from the Ministry, there was an attempt to involve all the actors of the third sector in the current cycle of drawing-up the document. 'Involvement' meant announcing the information about the NAP process on the Ministry's website.

About 12 organisations, including *Caritas*, the largest social sector NGO in Slovakia, took part in an introductory seminar at the beginning of 2006. At the seminar the process was outlined which included several meetings. However, due to changes within the Ministry of Social Affairs following parliamentary elections, the process was interrupted and in the end became very rushed, with no more meetings taking place. *Caritas* was told that information relating to the NAP (including drafts) would be available on the website, but it was not.

In theory NGOs could submit suggestions, but in fact the Ministry made all decisions itself, explaining that this was the result of time constraints.

In Slovakia there is no sense of ownership of the NAP. And NGOs think rather A "tick box" mentality prevails in order to comply with the EC requirements of drawing-up the NAP. Civil society tried to make it more specifically targeted at the most vulnerable groups and to include measurable indicators but these suggestions were not accepted.

Overall, civil society participation was better than in the first round.

## *Slovenia*

Representatives of NGOs (civil society, trade unions, user associations) were invited to an introductory seminar, however no dialogue process was established. Comments on the NAP were collected via the Internet, and some organisations were invited to comment on certain parts of the document.

A number of patient associations and private not-for-profit organisations were very actively involved in the NAP development and the policy making process. The most heated debate concerned long-term care (new law on which is still to be adopted by the Parliament). As a result, the NAP chapter about long-term care is perceived as being best developed.

*Caritas Slovenia* expects to be involved in the monitoring process as a member of the working group. There is a feeling that NGOs may start being involved in the assessment or monitoring process on their own initiative.

## *Spain*

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs that was responsible for drawing the NAP encouraged participation and coordination with other parties including NGOs.

There was only one meeting with NGOs during the development of the first NAP, so *Caritas* made suggestions with regard to enhancing participation in the design of the recent NAP. As a result, this time dialogue and participation was much more effective, and NGOs were more likely to get their proposals included.

## *Sweden*

Sweden is characterised by universal welfare state and a political culture that is open and very democratic. Extensive consultations between NGOs, beneficiaries, people living in poverty and government officials and politicians are a norm. Social Exclusion Network and civil society have been actively involved in the NAP process. However, the NAP reflects only to some extent the efforts to combat social exclusion. Time constraints are expected in the current NAP process, as the new government wants to redraft the existing document in a very short period of time.

## *United Kingdom*

In the UK there was more or less overall satisfaction amongst the NGOs with the NAP consultation process. However, some in the third sector see the NAP as a reporting process and no tangible policy results. This might be because much of the report's contents had already been agreed in other policy documents or that the "Get Heard" process was dominated by a particular niche in the anti-poverty networks.

The Social Policy Task Force was established by a number of UK NGOs and met regularly to develop its NAPs agenda and develop the "Get Heard" consultation process. The "Get Heard" initiative involved 146 community groups and organisations throughout the country and was

the main mechanism for grass roots involvement. It required a great deal of planning and devolving power to NGOs to organise and mobilise the engagement of people living in poverty. The “Get Heard” toolkit materialised out of this procedure and it can usefully be used for other community consultation programmes.

The gains from the NAP for the UK have been very much in terms of civil society engagement rather than policy. No new policies emerged from the process. All the policy statements in the UK NAP occur in other government documents. One future development in the process will be to get local authorities more involved in the planning and implementing the NAP.

In parts of the UK anti-poverty networks there is growing disquiet with “target culture” rather than outcomes and visible changes in the community. There is also concern that process might triumph over substance and it may well have done in this case. Future policy will be monitored closely.