

ENGAGING CITIZENS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN COHESION POLICY CONFERENCE BRUSSELS 6.2.2020

Notes from KS

Rural developers were very active in workshops and plenary. The words for including citizen's were the strongest ever in an open conference and the commissioner Ferreira showed determination to achieve results. Words are easy, doing is less. Unless there is budget, better to say unless there is an earmarked budget citizen's coding is getting difficult. Marion Eckardt from ELARD suggested earmarking in cohesion and structural funds. We know that cohesion funds have in fact been mostly directed for regional and City purposes, whereas we have to remember and remind our member states that cohesion policy is also about villages and citizen's involvement (Objective 5).

Former MEP Nistelrooy commented that we speak nicely about citizen's but at the same time we take out a big part of the financing for rural areas and from LEADER, dealing quite closely with citizen's. Rodriguez-Pose had research results with positive economic and social impact when investments were made to shrinking or less favoured areas. I intervened to support an increase of participative budgeting at local level and an earmarking for citizen-related coding (in the large sense) funding in the structural funds. LEADER/CLLD should be developed to include larger rural areas and exported to cities and the funding increased. National Rural Parliaments were given as a good example of citizen's and governments cooperation, where also financing of the action programmes resulting from the the NRP's are reality. A simpler language and simplified funding mechanisms were requested.

To conclude the Commissioner Ferreira announced a call to open early March on citizen's engagement in cohesion policy. Ten cases will be selected and be given 20 000€ each to diverse activities.

Dubravka Suica EC Vice-President

- The European Commission will come and meet citizens in the regions
- **Demographic change and ageing** are important factors
- Feedback is important and results should be implemented - **citizens must see the results and deliveries to feel purposeful**

Marko Pavic: Croatian Presidency

- The Presidency program is about developing EU, connecting EU, protecting EU and having an EU with greater influence,
- **Green deal** objectives are important
- **Change management will grow in the future**

Citizens in cohesion policy - it is good to include social partners, vulnerable groups and elderly.

Sanjay Pradhan – Open Government Partnership

People's trust is 40% and even less on EU and national governments – populism is growing. It is important to change from Elite to peoples discourse and **give a say to people** in an open government partnership

1. Open government

Citizens to shape policies – suggest policies - citizens initiatives

My voice platform Latvia 60% successes in initiatives, 70% used the platform

2. Citizens monitor projects = transparency.

3. Citizens monitor elite capture and corruption – in some areas savings are up to 1 bn and new contractors have been selected in tenders

4. Participative budgeting scaling is one solution

5. Citizens participation brings also benefits and economic advantage and creates work and better quality governance.

Yves Dejaeghere - G1000 Think tank

Poll: Britain 23% opposed a strong leader that would break rules, 54% would accept - danger?

Often older people and men present and the outcome usually reflect their preferences. Therefore policies often reflect their ideas. **Lobbies** have been playing a strong role with a sectoral voice. Often "angry" people and **strong personalities** are heard and also listened to. We need also slow thinking and take citizens seriously. **It is difficult to engage all, but good would be to engage a random group** of people (representing different sociocategories), get new people in the room that are not normally there. Citizens should be given time, information (information is power) and give concrete tasks. Also, people need to get something back for their efforts.

Joanna Howard University Sussex Cluster leader Institute of Development Studies - Perspective of Sustainable Development Goals

We live in a shrinking civic space, creating problems for minorities and feelings of exclusion and facing **governments non-responsiveness**.

SDG 16. Framework for citizen-led accountability 16.7: ensure responsive inclusive, participatory and representative decisionmaking at all levels

- People centred approach, leave no-one behind :
- Role for CSOs and local authorities.
- Negotiating dialogue – dialogue based processes

Roman Szelemiej, Mayor of Walbrzych

Agglomeration council – horizontal participation. Public consultations lead to ITI strategy (1 vote/1 community)

Halvorsen (State Secretary Norway), Ferreira Rubio (Transparency International), Rodriguez-Pose (London School of Economics)

Halvorsen: active citizens funds, bringing transparency elements

Ferreira: better quality government

Rodriguez-Pose: why engagement? Citizens have the right to participate and influence, authorities an obligation to listen. **What is the cost of not engaging citizens:**

1. inefficient policies - limited social, economic, environmental impacts
2. Lack of citizen engagement leads to low returns, discontent and resentment. The situation is getting worse now, euroscepticism higher than ever.
3. More you invest on those falling behind, places that don't matter - if we invest there we benefit more – we spend far too little. Policies are imposed rather than consulted and adapted to the needs. More you invest in the less favoured, a study suggests that the areas having received funds are less eurosceptic. We need targeted policies.

Former MEP Nistelrooy: We need more positive communication from Regio. How to get it out to the ground?

COCREATION Workshop

Melanie Steinbacher (LAG in Austria), Elena Calistru (Funky Citizens, Romania), Oliver Escobar (University of Edinburgh +What works Scotland) Dominik Hierlemann (Bertelsmann Stiftung)

Steinbacher: economic upswing, LAG support to rural civil society, a description on LAG work.

Calistru: "troublemaker" for governments. **Co-creating is a must.** How to include citizens in complicated issues like budgets. We need space for cocreating.

Escobar: Those who know can influence. It is about participate people meaningfully. What kind of citizen are citizens to be invited? We expect them to complain, watch, vote sometimes, but should they be codecision makers, coplanners aso... **It is important to increase citizen's participation, but we also need checks and balances.**

Dominik Hierlemann On-line was trendy, now more meeting face-to-face are expected. **Participation should be with impact and the impact should be measurable combined with feedback mechanisms.** Good deliberation takes time. **Good participation needs good budget.** Democracy is not happening for free.

Reports from parallell workshops

OPEN DATA – Has not worked very well and the quality should be improved.

COCREATION: Cocreation should be made a standard cmbined with coimplementation in a two-way process and checks.

TRANPARENCY: Need to do more at all levels.

CAPACITY BUILDING building has to be targeted. Also the Member state level need more capacity building, Collaborative skills for public authorities, to listen more and not make the citizen a secondary partner.

Emil Boc – On-line participative budgets and good use of Cohesion funds

Enrico Rossi, a cohesion ombudsman.

Luca Jahier (President EESC) Map practices, Cohesion policy 1/3 of EU-budget. Earmark 15% to citizen's related activities.

Karl Heinz Lambert: Cohesion is a method of partnership, synergie with the stability pact.

Younous Omarjee We represent people. Political interests of regional decisionmakers are not allowed.

Commissioner Ferreira closed the conference repeating the importance of involving citizen's taking note of the excellent ideas from the speakers and the Audience.
