

You are listening to the Shaping Inclusion and Diversity Podcast - Episode 4 - on how getting very familiar with your organisation's problems can be powerful

If you're lucky, the inclusion work in your National Agency these days is going just fine.

You have no crises to deal with, no difficult issues to resolve, no shortage of funds, no staff turnover – it's just business as usual.

If, however, you can see challenges on the horizon for your inclusion work, if you are being asked to take on more work than you can handle or if your budget is under serious pressure, you need to figure out a way to bring the situation back under control. You need to plot a course of action in inclusion which maximises your resources and leads to the best possible results.

When an organisation is under pressure, they tend to make one of two mistakes:

- *They immediately start making a plan, or*
- *They immediately start taking action (without even bothering to make a plan first...)*

There is a real danger in getting carried away and jumping directly to the middle of a strategy development process, especially if you are under time pressure, but remember: you can't choose the right solution if you don't know what the problem (really) is.

Transição

Earlier we mentioned that the first step in defining a strategy is to stop and gain awareness of our current position. This can be summarized in the following question:

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

To know where we are, we must answer a series of sub-questions. What has happened in our inclusion work up to now? What has gone well, what has not, and why? What are the most important challenges we are facing in the National Agency right this moment?

We did feel the real need and the possibility to really go into depth, to see, ok so, we've been doing lots of stuff, but how does it all add up? And we have been doing this sort of activities and we get good results and good reviews afterwards, but now we are a year later, two years later, four years later, six years later and we should get back in touch with those people - what is the real effect? Do you get tangible results when it comes to new project proposals, or does it lead

to the same participation? Or does it lead to capacity building as such? Or is it such a dead end? And how does all these activities that we are doing, how do they match up?

That's Marjolein Vandenbroucke from the National Agency in Belgium Flanders speaking about that moment when they felt the need to do an in-depth analysis.

Transição

A well-defined problem is a problem half-solved. The purpose of the analysis phase is to show beyond any doubt exactly where our problem areas are. A good strategy is based on facts – facts about our position (our strengths and weaknesses) as well as facts about the bigger environment we are embedded in. Chapter 6 of the Shaping Inclusion and Diversity Publication takes you step by step through such a “needs analysis”.

When it comes to gathering information from the groups and organisations we'd like to reach, Anne Molloy from the Irish National Agency suggests the following best practise:

With the mapping I think it is more of looking at, kinda clear, seeing the mapping as a relationship building with the potential target groups as opposed to kinda extracting information and kinda looking to see if they can apply.

We got curious to learn more about that initial phase of the process. That's why we asked [Marko Banković](#) from the Serbian National Agency how they started their strategy process. Here's what he said:

In our organisation, we try to do a lot of things not always with much resources, you know, generally. We are newcomers for many of the things that other countries might have done like 10 years ago or whenever. So we try when we have something to really get the information, do the research as much as possible and then, you know, try to adapt it to our local circumstances using the resources that we can. So, what we did when we started, we, that working we group, one of the first things was let's gather all the data, all the publications that we can get, get all the different strategies that some other organisations might have, both nationally and other NAs or whatever. So we gathered some of those. It wasn't like when you are doing an academic research, so you have a list of all these, but it was a good start. It gave us the key points to look for but also we have a lot, let's say a lot but within our context, with our number of people, we have several people with a lot of experience in various fields.

The Analysis can sometimes be a bit overwhelming. We talked to about that with Miruna Covaci from the Romanian National Agency:

I did feel a little bit overwhelmed, at least in beginning when I was going very much in detail in all the framework, all the context and all the political documents, policy documents that do tackle

inclusion at the european level and at national level, so the context was so broad and there was so much information regarding the background where we, Erasmus+ as an inclusion instrument, could come and could have an impact. So it could become overwhelming. So I understand if anyone feels a little bit worried.

But don't panic, these worries are eventually replaced by a good feeling of having a better grip on things. Here's Marjolein Vandenbroucke again:

It took us quite some time to do this evaluation, but the effort was really really worthwhile. Because during the evaluation, thanks to the evaluation, the process of the evaluation the new process have been started, internally and externally, so we have several positive side effects

Now it's your turn! How about reaching out to a couple of key stakeholders in inclusion and diversity in your national reality and ask them how they perceive your organisation and where they suggest you start digging for references? You might be surprised with what you'll hear!

Outro