You are listening to the Shaping Inclusion and Diversity Podcast - Episode 5 - on why it's important to map the challenges your organisation is facing

"Without leaps of imagination or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning." — Gloria Steinem

We make plans in our head <u>all day long:</u> organizing personal and professional tasks, deciding on the order of stops while running errands or when organizing an event or surprise.

We have so much experience in planning, that putting together a strategic plan for our inclusion work should be a piece of cake.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. The <u>more complex</u> the situation, the more difficult it is to make coherent plans. There are few fields of work which are as complex and as broad as the field of inclusion, so it is no wonder that National Agencies often find it difficult to know where to start when it comes to creating a strategic plan.

In order to put together a strategic plan, we need two important ingredients:

● The Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Implementation Guide

and

● The result of our own National Agency's needs analysis from the previous phase.

These tools present **two important perspectives that need to flow into the Planning**: the **expectations** of the European Commission and the **situation** of the National Agency. Both of them need to be taken into account at each of the three steps in the Planning process.

Now, let's take a step back for a minute… What is this planning phase exactly about?

According to Jutta Kivimäki from the National Agency in Finland, after you have discussed what your dream is, it is time to make a list of <u>promises</u>, of what you are going to do to reach those dreams.

And that pretty much summarizes the Planning phase. Based on the work done in the Analysis phase, we can identify in which areas our National Agency should take action.

According to [Hanna Schüßler](#), from the National Agency for Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps in Germany, planning is a bit like a *"Mainly it is also a little bit of a puzzle of putting together what we are already doing and what we still want to add to that."*

Now here comes the problem: there's always <u>A LOT</u> our National Agency could be doing and our needs analysis certainly highlighted <u>pleeeenty</u> of opportunities. As much as this is the moment for creative brainstorming, for new ideas and out-of-the-box thinking, eventually, there comes the moment when <u>we need to make decisions!</u>

As [Jim Collins](), the author of the best-selling management books "Good to Great" and "Built to Last," is fond of saying: "If you have more than three priorities, you don't have any."

Chapter 7 of the Shaping Inclusion and Diversity Publication guides us through a step-by-step approach of narrowing down the many possibilities into the few priorities that will be the basis for our strategic plan.

Once that's done, it's all about defining clear objectives for these priorities to make them e<u>asily implementable and measurable</u>.

Consider this: A priority is really nothing more than an idea which has been prioritised over other ideas. However, <u>it is not possible to "do" a priority</u> (just like you cannot "do" an idea). Before we can start "doing" (that is, before we can start taking action), we must <u>first define objectives</u> for what we are trying to accomplish.

[Anne Molloy]() from the Irish National Agency describes how inclusion is part of their bigger strategic plan and which areas are touched upon:

We have got a lot of, kind of, levels, I supposed, going on. We have an organisation strategy that were, actually, developing at the moment - we have been focusing on integration inclusion into that very much. So, there is two part of it: one is the inclusion in terms of the target group and reaching inclusion target groups. And the other part that is integration inclusion into the organisation. So, how we work together, across all levels: recruitment, the board, you know, we have got a cluster-group kind of working on that last year as well. So we are kind of trying to look at it at a very kind of holistic way, I supposed.

Just like in the Analysis phase, we should never do planning without keeping our stakeholders in mind. We tried to find out more about how that can look like and talked to [Mirella Olivari]()from the Italian National Agency.

The NA should create connections at local level with the local bodies, specially, and local organisations, for instance. Just, as I say, trying to create link with national strategies together. So, I think it's so important to come back to the local level that is in this moment so in difficulties, first of all. It is important to reach them and also to have the opportunity to listen to them about their difficulties. So, before, to write a national strategy, I think in this moment we need time to prepare. Preparation, or us, is important in projects but also, and I'm learning during these years, it is also important to us. It is not enough just to take the European Strategy and put it

into practice, no. It's different. The European Strategy is a framework, big one, where you can shape your national strategy. So, I think we need time to prepare it. So, it is time to come back to the local territories and to start the dialogue with municipalities, for instance.

And by the way, planning can sometimes bring out surprising outcomes, for example in Belgium Flanders, here's Marjolein Vandenbroucke:

We do not have the main focus on project applications anymore. It is a possible outcome, but it is not the goal. The goal is to have an impact on the organisations.

So do you feel ready to move from Analysis to Planning? If your answer is "not yet", do consult the step-by-step instructions in the Shaping Inclusion and Diversity Publication.

Also, Hanna Schüßler shares the following suggestion: *"There will be the colleague support group organised by SALTO Inclusion & Diversity on drafting the inclusion and diversity strategy . And I think the exchange with other NA members will also be quite beneficial for that. To see a little bit how the others do it."*