The National Action Plan on Social Inclusion: an opportunity for the third sector?

Taco Brandsen, Emmanuele Pavolini, Costanzo Ranci, Birgit Sittermann and Annette Zimmer

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General introduction to TSEP Working Paper series

This paper is part of the **TSEP Working Paper series**, and is based upon work conducted by the authors within the Third Sector European Policy (TSEP) network. The primary, overarching objective of the network is to describe and analyse the trajectory of 'horizontal' (industry cross-cutting) European policy towards the 'third sector', understood as a 'multi-level process' (see Appendix for a Glossary of terms).

Individual members of the network share an expertise on the third sector in their countries, but come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds (including political science, sociology, and policy studies). Countries included are the Czech Republic, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. The sample includes:
 • Major geographical regions of the EU/larger as well as smaller countries
 • Different types of national constitutional structures and welfare systems
 • 7 established Member States, one new Member, and Switzerland

TSEP Working Paper 14

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Executive Summary

The European Union's influence on its member states is currently the topic of frequent discussion, under the label of Europeanisation. With the establishment of the single market, further steps were necessary to ensure the future economic development of the member states. This included the fight against social exclusion, which refers to a situation in which people are prevented from participating fully in society because lack of financial assets, low education or insufficient skills. One means introduced to pursue this goal was the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (NAPincl), introduced at the Lisbon meeting in March 2000. One of the objectives of the NAPincl was the 'mobilisation of all relevant actors'. Member states are explicitly expected to include social partners (trade unions and employers), NGO's and social service providers in the fight against social exclusion.

This paper examines whether the introduction of the NAP has led to the desired mobilisation, and whether it has had the effect of bringing third sector organisations active at the national level closer together. Seven countries (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) were included in this case study. The period under investigation included the process of setting up both the first NAPincl (submitted in 2001 and covering the period 2001-2003) and the second (submitted in 2003 and covering the period 2003-2005).

The empirical results we have found in relation to mobilisation were quite varied. In some countries, particularly in Sweden and the United Kingdom, the introduction of the NAPincl was perceived to be associated with significant changes in the national tradition of involving third sector organisations in social inclusion policy: many new organisations came together (including user groups) and they were allowed to participate fully in the policymaking process. In the other countries the impact was far more limited. Sometimes (for example in Italy) the government simply ignored the European objective, whereas in others (for example Germany) it merely led to the revision of existing procedures. On the whole, the effect was greatest where no national tradition of mobilising the third sector existed. Where third sector participation was already institutionalised before and outside the NAP process, the NAP led to minor extensions or revisions of existing procedures.

Interestingly enough, the NAP seems to have had little impact on third sector policy communities across the board. Generally nothing changed, and where it did, the effect remained confined to the small community of Europe-minded third sector organisations involved in social inclusion policy. One could argue that this outcome merely reflects national third sector policy communities. Where they were fragmented, any effects of the NAP remain within the affected fragment; where they were integrated, effects were incorporated as a matter of course; but in no instance did the NAP have a significant bridging effect.

The evidence raises the question of how one should judge the effect of the NAPincl. One should not rely too strongly on a type of analysis that views the NAP in terms of implementation, of European pressure in the face of national opposition. What matters is that the NAP may have facilitated or revised ongoing changes at the national level. If this is the case, then one should not analyse this instrument in terms of an alien influence that may or may not be complied with. Rather, it should be understood in terms of how it weaved into national processes already set in motion.

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

While studies of the third sector as an economic and social actor, and their significance within particular fields of policy have grown significantly in recent years, their links to broader policy processes are poorly understood. This paper is part of an effort to fill that gap, and is one in a series which seek to build our understanding of the nature of the third sector's relationship to the European policy process.

Putting together 'European public policy process' and the 'third sector' suggest an extraordinarily wide range of potential subject matter. Earlier papers in this series focused on the national situation in nine countries. This paper, however, has a different focus. It develops an analysis of a particular policy initiative, which in recent years has been processed at the national and European level and actually or potentially implicates the third sector in both - what the TSEP network has referred to as a 'core case' (see Appendix 1). It is important to note that the unit of analysis is the policy initiative relating to the third sector, the policy actors (*all* sectors) that cluster around it, and the institutional context that frames its development - and not the third sector itself, or individual third sector organisations. These 'core cases' necessarily involve actors from both domestic third sector policy communities or networks, and EU level actors and institutions, in jointly designing and/or implementing policy: in other words, in the EU policy analytic jargon, they involve 'multi level processes', although not necessarily multi-level governance (see Appendix 1).

In settling on 'core cases' for exploration, three considerations were taken into account. First, the cases were deliberately chosen to capture a reasonable amount of the diversity of the generic EU policy process. Reflecting the highly complex EU constitutional set up, the precise institutional configuration which the multi-level process involves varies considerably according to topical and issue area, so initiatives were chosen to pick up some of the main sources of variation in terms of *policy mode*, ranging across the Community Method, the Open Method of Co-ordination and other variants.

Second, we have also aspired to capture the extent to which the third sector is involved at *multiple stages* of the policy process; the link to the third sector literature here is that scholars have pointed to the third sector's 'polyvalence' and multiple functionality (see TSEP Working Paper 1).

Third, cases were chosen which seem to involve at least the theoretical opportunity for third sector engagement of a horizontal form. This could be either in the sense of involving policy actors in cross cutting domestic and/or European policy processes identified in step 1; or in the sense of engaging with third sector organisations from across a range of 'vertical' industries from within 'human' or 'social welfare' services (in US and UK language respectively), and even beyond it (such as environmental protection, or international development), or with needs and constituencies defined in terms of cross-cutting issues. Table 1 lists the EU-specific cases examined, and shows how each captures a different combination of policy mode, policy stage/third sector function, and meaning of 'horizontality'.

Table I: EU-specific 'Closed cases' examined in TSEP

EU policy case	Policy mode/ year of initiation	Policy stage	Third sector 'function'	Sense in which policy case is 'horizontal'
European Statute of Association	Traditional Community method, 1984	Agenda setting	Sector advocacy (for customised legal instrument)	Legal mechanism potentially relevant for organisations wishing to undertake economic and social activities across Member State borders
National Action Plans for Employment: Orientation to '<u>civil society</u>' and '<u>social economy</u>' change over time (most recently Horizontal objective C in 2002, and Guideline 10 in 2003 respectively)	Policy coordination and benchmarking: Open Method of Coordination, 1997	Implementation and evaluation	Advocacy through demonstration, service delivery	Third sector organisations from range of industries can be involved in national employment strategies
National Action Plans for combating social exclusion: Objective 4 invites 'mobilisation of <u>NGOs</u>'	Policy coordination and benchmarking: Open Method of Coordination, Lisbon process, 2000	Implementation and evaluation	Advocacy through demonstration, service delivery, community building	Third sector actions, including social welfare services, culture, recreation and environmental protection, explicitly linked to social inclusion
Local social capital element of Structural funds, esp ESF*: Piloting (Article 6) and mainstreaming (Article 4.2) with special access to <u>NGOs</u>	Multi level Governance/Partnership, 1999 (pilot), 2000 (mainstreamed)	Design, Implementation and evaluation	Innovation, Service delivery, community building	Small community organisations often active across fields; some funded initiatives explicitly promoted as fostering 'horizontal' initiative; 'Social capital' concept not tied to particular industry
Convention on the Future of Europe/Constitutional process	Not identified as 'mode' in literature: Unique and unprecedented (2002)	Agenda setting	Sector advocacy (for constitutional recognition of socio-political role)	Constitutional design: draft (yet to be legitimised by national level processes) refers to the *generic* role 'representative <u>associations</u>' in 'the democratic life of the union'; the extent to which 'single market rules' apply as a general principle; specifies 'fundamental rights' cutting across fields; and refers to EESC's role regarding '<u>civil society</u>'

* European Social Fund

In addition, the process of preparing for, running and following through to the United Nations Year of Volunteering (2001) - as well as the medium term legacy it has bequeathed - has also been examined in all countries. This has been to explicitly bring an analytic spotlight on volunteering as an aspect of voluntarism, which is a key ingredient in at least some national and international third sector definitions; to form an impression of how UN and EU may compare as 'external shocks' (even if the connectedness of EU and domestic institutions of course implies that the EU is no longer purely 'external' to Member States); and to enable the inclusion of Switzerland in the multi-level core.

Appendix 2 to this paper provides more details on data sources. This paper is part of our first, tentative efforts to move towards a more systematic account of European third sectors' roles in contemporary policy processes, but we hope they will provide a platform for further work in the years to come.

Jeremy Kendall
PSSRU and CCS
LSE
31 August 2005

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1. Introduction

The European Union's influence on its member states is currently the topic of frequent discussion, under the label of Europeanisation. One way to examine Europeanisation, which we will adopt here, is to study different ways in which the EU passes down policy concepts and requirements (c.f. Knill and Lehmkuhl, 2002). Such pressure from the European Union may lead to a redistribution of influence and resources at the national level. By implication, this presents a window of opportunity for some actors, while others may lose their prominent position (Risse, Cowles et al., 2001; Börzel, 2003). This paper examines whether the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (NAPincl) present such an opportunity for the third sector.

The involvement of the third sector has become a prominent topic in Brussels, and its role in setting up and implementing the NAPincl is a core objective of the National Action Plans. However, until now there has been no systematic examination of whether this objective has actually been realised. This is, of course, far from certain. The European concept of involving the third sector may contrast with different national traditions of developing policy against social exclusion. Theoretically, its impact may be greater where there is a clearer difference between the national and European, or the reverse. Only a systematic empirical comparison can reveal what actually happens.

This paper is based on evidence gathered during the project 'The Third Sector and European Public Policy' (TSEP-project) and draws on results from the nine participating countries.[1] Our research objective was not to study whether the NAPincl has been a successful method in combating social exclusion, but to what extent it has achieved the objective of third sector involvement in policy formation. Has the EU actually changed the national position of the third sector within the political system through this approach? And has the third sector's involvement had repercussions for the third sector itself, by strengthening the connections between different organisations?

In the next section, we will start with a brief description of the empirical object of the paper, the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion and the Open Method of Co-ordination. Section 3 discusses our theoretical approach and methodology. Section 4, the main part of this paper, will present the evidence we found at the national level. In section 5, we will try to explain the results with reference to the concept of 'goodness of fit': how do EU guidelines for setting up the NAPs relate to national traditions in the field of social inclusion? And how exactly does that matter? The paper will end with a short conclusion in section 6.

2. Soft instruments of European social policy

The National Action Plans on Social Inclusion

With the establishment of the single market further steps were necessary to ensure the future economic development of the member states. This included the fight against social exclusion, which refers to a situation in which people are prevented from participating fully in society because of lack of financial assets, low education or insufficient skills.[2] One means introduced to pursue this goal was the National Action Plan, an instrument first used in the fight against unemployment (the 'NAP Employment'). The European Council later introduced the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (NAPincl) at its Lisbon meeting in March 2000. This had four objectives, which are the guidelines for policy on social exclusion (Council of the European Union 30 November 2000; 14110/00 SOC 470[3]):

- To facilitate participation in employment and access by all to the resources, rights, goods, and services;
- To prevent the risks of exclusion;
- To help the most vulnerable;
- To mobilise all relevant bodies.

It is this last objective which has been central to our enquiry. Member states are explicitly expected to include social partners (trade unions and employers), NGO's and social service providers in the fight against social exclusion (cf. Council of the European Union 25 November

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[1] For further information on the project please consult the two appendices of this paper and the project's website: www.lse.ac.uk/collections/tsep.

[2] Often social exlusion is equated with poverty, but strictly speaking the latter term refers more narrowly to financial deprivation, whereas the former stresses participation.

[3] c.f. http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/social_inclusion/objectives_en.htm.

2002, 14164/1/02 REV1). The significance of involving such organisations is not only emphasized in documents, but actually reflected in the process of setting up the NAP at the European level.

Within the Commission, it is the DG Employment and Social Affairs (since the Barroso presidency: DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) that is in charge of this process.[4] Since the start of the social inclusion programmes in the late 1980s, Commission officials have co-operated with third sector organisations on a regular basis. One of the organisations at the forefront of this co-operation has been the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN). Its national branches play an important role in representing the needs of the people the EU ultimately wants to reach. In addition, both the Platform of European Social NGOs and the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) have a strong stake in the NAP process. To understand this close connection, we have to take into account that the organisations most closely involved in the process receive direct financial support from the Commission and (as in the case of the EAPN) have sometimes been founded with its assistance.

In this paper, however, we will not discuss the European level process - though it is fascinating in itself - but rather focus on its transmission to the member states. The Commission's understanding of partnerships at the national level remains vaguely defined and there are no clear indications what to expect.

The Open Method of Co-ordination

In the guidelines proposed by the Council, member states agreed on the significance of the participation of third sector organisations. However, social inclusion is an area of subsidiarity: the member states rather than the EU are entitled to develop policy in this field. It is for this reason that the EU uses the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC), a method which was formally introduced at the Lisbon Council (2000), although it had been experimented with in the preceding decade. In comparison to other EU instruments such as the directive, this is a 'soft' instrument, applied in policy fields which are not clearly included in EU treaties. The background of the introduction of this approach was the need for more flexible policymaking mechanisms within the existing institutional framework; the wish to construct EU social policy without compromising

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[4] Another key stakeholder is the Social Protection Committee, which co-ordinates the work between the Commission and the Council.

national sovereignty; and the legitimacy crises of the late 1990s and early 2000s that gave rise to calls for more transparent and democratic decision-making:

> The OMC seems to bring a breath of fresh air into the mechanisms of common EU action, allow for a novel way of unfolding the co-ordination of national areas of public action which does not involve a formal or full-fledged transfer of competences (Borás and Jacobsson, 2004: 187).

The method is in fact a collection of strategies that developed within an existing tradition of European soft law. It means that the Council agrees upon goals, which every member state is free to reach by the means that apply best to their national situation. A system of indicators is used to evaluate whether goals have been reached. There are no penalties when a country does not reach the mutually agreed targets. However, such failure will be openly displayed, as benchmarking is one of the OMC's main functions. It is hoped that this 'naming and shaming' will be an effective driver of member states, as no country would want to rank last in the annual Commission report. In other words, the hierarchy of directives is possibly replaced by competition over reputation. In addition to this mechanism for increasing the effectiveness of multi-level policymaking, the OMC is also intended to further the participation of actors other than national states, public, commercial and non-profit.

Recently, the OMC has been applied to an increasing number of policy fields such as youth policy, care for the elderly, health care, and education. The OMC can be regarded as an efficient and flexible means to foster policy co-ordination between the different member states in sensitive areas without encroaching upon national sovereignty. Some have argued that this is simply another means by which competences drift towards the European executive, and national parliaments lose influence (Bauer and Knöll, 2003). Bulmer and Radaelli (2004) suggest, by contrast, that this method is not a strong driver of Europeanisation, as it is not meant to actually prescribe an obligatory institutional setting. If Europeanisation does occur, it is (more) voluntary and non-hierarchical, the effect of a learning process which the OMC explicitly aims for. As Begg and Berghman put it:

> When difficulties arise […] the risk is that the absence of hard law will mean that common aims are abandoned or watered down. It may be, however, that the Open Method of Coordination constitutes the postmodern, flexible policymaking 'laboratory' that we need in a period of far-reaching societal transition in which not only needs and

aspirations are under revision but in which also the spokeswomen of these new needs, aspirations and interests find their place (2002: 191).

However if one judges the OMC theoretically, its actual meaning depends on its effectiveness in realising objectives agreed at the European level. This paper confronts two major objectives of the method: flexibility and participation. While increased involvement of the third sector is an important aspect of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion at the European level, it remains to be seen if and how national policymakers adopt and translate it.

3. Approach, research questions and methodology

Approach

Although it has various connotations and definitions, we will here define Europeanisation as 'domestic adaptation to the pressures emanating directly or indirectly from EU membership' (Featherstone 2003: 7). Fascinating as this process is, it is notoriously hard to investigate with precision. To begin with one must specify the impact of European policy, which may be conceived of in several ways. Second, when observing changes, one must disentangle the influence of European policy from the impact of other variables (for example, changes in national policy). Finally, there is the task of identifying systematic explanations for the observed pattern of impact among the various countries. In studying the impact of the NAPincl within member states, there is no choice but to face all these challenges. The analysis in this paper draws on the heuristic framework and methodology of the TSEP-network (see Appendix 2), as well as on institutional theory that is suitable for the specific analyses at hand. We will here discuss briefly how we have dealt with the three issues on the basis of this approach.

Defining the impact of the NAPincl
The first issue is how to define the impact of the NAPincl, given that our interest is in the objective to 'mobilise all relevant bodies'. One can discuss long and hard the question of what constitutes mobilisation (and we have), and on the basis of our heuristic framework it was decided that several potential aspects of mobilisation should be taken into account. These can be classed as three types.

The first type is the process: the interaction between national governments and third sector organisations in the process of setting up the NAPs. This breaks down into two distinct questions.

To begin with, which actors have been involved in the NAP? Did national governments involve any third sector organisations at all? And if so, has the introduction of the NAP led to the inclusion of actors that were not originally involved in social inclusion policy? The second question is how the third sector organisations in question were involved. Had there been meetings, or was there just an opportunity to hand in written statements? Had the suggestions of third sector organisations been taken into consideration at all or was the whole process simply a formality? Although interesting and certainly relevant, we will not discuss the involvement of the third sector in the implementation of social inclusion policy.

The second concerns policy itself. The introduction of the NAP may have changed national social inclusion policy. Given our interest in the involvement of the third sector, we would be specifically interested in knowing how the NAP process allowed third sector organisations to influence policy in a way that would not have been possible otherwise. Methodologically, this is clearly difficult. If the input from third sector organisations in the NAP process can be determined (this is hard in practice) it would need to be assessed in terms of its effect on the final document (which is even harder). Moreover, most governments have established relationships with the third sector, close ones in many cases, and to attribute any policy innovations to a specific context such as the NAP process with certainty would be impossible. Finally, it is difficult to determine whether such innovations would not have been included if the third sector had not been involved. It requires a Weberian thought experiment for which we do not have the strength of mind. However, we can examine whether there have been policy innovations that can be attributed to the NAP - as argued below, this is a realistic assessment given our material - and then note whether government officials and third sector organisations *perceive* these innovations to be the result of opportunities offered by the NAP process. This is only circumstantial evidence in terms of the NAP process's actual impact, but it does make sense in that our research is ultimately not about social exclusion policy, but about the position of the third sector in national policymaking. If the latter's involvement is believed by all parties to have been substantial and significant, then its factual impact is less relevant.

The third aspect of mobilisation is the creation of stronger links between actors within the third sector. This may occur in two ways relevant to our inquiry. One possibility is that the effect of European policy is to strengthen the links between national third sector organisations and their European counterparts. EU umbrella organisations rely on input from the national third sectors, while the latter increasingly have need of information about European developments. Given this mutual dependence, it is not inconceivable that the introduction of the NAP encourages links across levels. Another possibility is that the NAP strengthens national third sector policy communities (actors concerned with the position of the third sector). These may comprise not

only third sector organisations themselves, but also officials, scholars and the media. Horizontality refers to links cutting across different vertical policy fields (see Appendix 1).

Disentangling European from national influences

When studying the NAPincl process on the national level from the Europeanisation angle, one important question has to be taken into account: is change at the domestic level really due to EU influence and (to what extent) can we exclude other influences? This is one of the central issues in Europeanisation research (Radaelli, 2003). In our effort, this methodological pitfall could be avoided by virtue of its place in a broader project. Social inclusion policy (or, more narrowly, anti-poverty policy) is one of the areas in which third sector involvement has traditionally been most pervasive. An examination of social inclusion policy was therefore part of the research package in national level research[5], and there was a basis for distinguishing the impact of European and national policies. In some countries, where the introduction of the NAPincl coincided with a change of national policy (as in France, for instance) this has of course been more difficult. In those cases we can only regard our analysis as exploratory, because it would almost certainly require a longer time scale to clarify the influence of the NAP separate from national policy changes. Having said this, one should not artificially separate processes that in practice are intertwined. European policy may present a window of opportunity for national policymakers, allowing them to put or keep issues on the agenda (see, for instance, our UK and Dutch cases) - in fact, the confusion between national and European policy may be quite deliberate. One cannot hope to untie such a knot, but intensive examination can at least allow a reconstruction of the various influences that have determined the ultimate outcome.

Explaining variation among countries

Finally, there is the question how to explain the similarity or variation that we have found among the countries. There are a number of theoretical approaches that could be adopted, which we can whittle down to three main categories (not on the basis of a conceptualisation of mechanisms, but of the locus of such mechanisms). The first focuses on the direct interaction between the various layers of government, in this case the European and national level. The explanation is then based on how actors in member states engage with actors at the European level. The second approach examines the relationship between the European policy effort and the national tradition in terms of similarity and difference. The distance between the two should then be at the core of the observed pattern. For example, if the EU advocates solutions that are completely alien to one of the member states, this may hinder their acceptance (or the reverse). The third approach focuses

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[5] See TSEP working papers numbers 2-10, published online at http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/TSEP.

on the relationships between member states. The OMC deliberately includes an element of naming and shaming, which may have a progressive effect on the impact of European policy.

In our case study, we have restricted ourselves to the second type of approach, which constructs explanations on the basis of the difference between European policies and national ones. In the literature on Europeanisation, this has often been referred to as 'goodness-of-fit'. This theoretical approach implies that the (successful) adoption of European policies and processes depends on the relationship between the characteristics of the former and those of the latter. As the difference becomes greater, adaptational pressure will grow. The approach lends itself to straightforward application, but this is a risk as well as an advantage. The concept becomes oversimplistic when various intermediary variables are not taken into account. For instance, the relationships between the EU and its members are not equal, which means that adaptational pressure is not equally applied or received either. Moreover, since different types of institutions exist, different types of misfit exist, which often remain underspecified. Also, the notion of pressure is a problematic one. It is usually deduced from changes themselves, but it is itself only a condition for change, and not even a necessary one (Börzel and Risse, 2003). However, the fundamental problem is that goodness-of-fit often remains undertheorised (Toshkov, 2005). In itself, it is a rather structuralist concept, which needs a theory of agency to breathe life into it. In this sense, the Europeanisation literature is only at an early stage of its theoretical development.

As a result of such theoretical complications, it has proved difficult to generalise on the basis of the empirical applications made so far. However, goodness-of-fit remains a suitable concept for our current purpose. The approach conceptually captures the impact of European policy in a manner that is very useful for comparative research. Our clear focus on a single aspect of a single policy field, combined with the theoretical definitions and toolkit of the TSEP-project specify the misfit notion sufficiently to avoid the worst methodological pitfalls. In this context, goodness-of-fit is examined by referring to the types of impact described above, which in theoretical terms can be described as policy modes and policy communities (see Appendix 1). Since our focus is on the mobilisation of third sector organisations in relation to social inclusion policy, then determining the 'goodness of fit' requires us to contrast this EU objective with the domestic policy mode dominant within that particular policy field regarding that particular subject, and with the structure of national third sector policy communities.[6]

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[6] Measuring misfit has been a major methodological concern in Europeanisation literature. There have been attempts to test fit and misfit more systematically than is usually the case (e.g. Falkner, 2003). However, there can be no general operationalisation, as this is clearly related to the theoretical framework used in the analysis at hand. In this paper, we will refer primarily to *perceived* (socially and discursively constructed) fit or misfit.

Of course, that leaves the question of what to do with the observation of a misfit. In Europeanisation literature, many studies have argued that there has to be a misfit between EU policy and the national situation to foster changes in the member states, and that pressure to adapt will grow as the misfit grows. However, this needs qualification. There clearly needs to be a difference between European and domestic policy for a change to be necessary, but this is not necessarily the result of pressure, nor is there necessarily adaptation. It seems impossible to make such general claims, not only because of the empirical variety and complexity, but also because such a generalisation effort is senseless without sounder theoretical grounding. From a contingency perspective, one could say that a greater misfit leads to more pressure and therefore more change; yet from a normative institutionalist background (cf. March and Olsen, 1989; Scott, 1995) one could equally well argue that as the conflict between the assumptions and habits at the European and national level intensifies, there is *less* chance of European policy being successfully adopted. Actors may choose not to adapt.

The theoretical framework of the TSEP-project does not cast judgement on this a priori. From the perspective of opportunity structures, the NAP process may be a threat to established governance structures and the actors who benefit most from them, but it may also offer an opportunity for new actors to enter the policy arena, and it is unclear how the balance will tilt. In this paper, we will test both options. The adaptation hypothesis states that actors will adapt when there is a misfit. The rejection or confirmation of this hypothesis will not in itself provide a sufficient explanation for the observed phenomena, but it will help weave a theoretical thread through our cross-country material and clear the way for more systematic future testing of elements of our theoretical framework.

Research questions

On the basis of this approach, we identified six research questions on which our investigation has subsequently focused. The first five capture the various aspects of mobilisation discussed above, while the sixth relates the findings to the theoretical approach chosen for this analysis.

- How inclusive was the NAPincl process?
- How were third sector organisations involved in the NAPincl process?
- What was the impact of their involvement on national social inclusion policy?
- Has the NAPincl process strengthened links between national and European third sector organisations?
- Has the NAPincl process strengthened national third sector policy communities?

- Do the findings confirm the adaptation hypothesis?

In presenting our findings, we will make use of the classification low/medium/high, which we will specify in relation to each research question. The classification of countries will be based on the most recent state of affairs within the countries in question.

Methodology

The involvement of third sector organisations in anti-exclusion policy at the EU level is an established procedure, which the Commission clearly supports. However, it is unclear whether this commitment will reach through to the national level. In the TSEP-network we have attempted to ascertain whether Europeanisation occurred, in the shape of third sector involvement in setting up the NAP at the national level. As a link to the broader project, we have also examined whether such involvement resulted in or strengthened horizontal, cross-industry coalitions within the third sector. For further information on the position of the NAPincl case in the TSEP project, the theoretical assumptions of the research and the methodology, see Appendix 2.

Empirical evidence was gathered by the country teams working within the TSEP project. Two countries that were part of the project, the Czech Republic and Switzerland, were left out of the analysis of the NAP on Social Inclusion. Most of the research for this project was conducted before the Czech Republic joined the EU[7] and Switzerland, as a non-EU state, did not develop a NAP. The countries under investigation were therefore France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Our data derive from two types of sources:

- Documentation: official documents from government departments, formal statements by third sector organisations and other public resources.
- Interviews with government officials, third sector representatives and experts.

The period under investigation included the process of setting up both the first NAPincl (submitted in 2001 and covering the period 2001-2003) and the second (submitted in 2003 and covering the period 2003-2005). Research was conducted from January 2003 until March 2005.

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[7] As an accession state, the Czech Republic did produce a so-called 'Joint Inclusion Memorandum' instead of a NAP (Fric, 2005). This Joint Inclusion Memorandum was established by the Czech government in co-operation with three third sector organisations (Člověk v tísni, Charita and Národní rada zdravotně postižených).

4. Empirical evidence about the impact of the NAPincl

How inclusive was the NAPincl process?

Our first question was which actors were included in setting up the NAP, and whether this included any third sector organisations that were previously not involved in the formation of social inclusion policy. Even if the NAP did not result in significant policy innovations in the majority of countries, it seems to have had more influence in terms of the inclusiveness of the process (although, as will be demonstrated in the next section, much depends on the manner of the inclusion). We will classify inclusiveness as low where the third sector was not involved in setting up the NAP. It will be categorised as medium when only established partners for consultation were involved. Where the NAP has led to the significant involvement of actors which were not previously involved in the formation of social exclusion policy, involvement will be deemed high.

In one country, *Italy*, the involvement of third sector organisations has actually decreased. For the 2001 version, there was consultation with the 'Forum Permanente del Terzo Settore', the Associazione delle ONG Italiane (active in the field of international development cooperation) and the Italian branches of three European networks or platforms, the EAPN-Italy, the Forum della Disabilità and the Federazione Italiana degli Organismi per le Persone Senza Dimora. However, after the change to the Berlusconi government there seems to have been no formal involvement from third sector organisations in the NAP process at all, not even from the trade unions.

In the rest of Europe, it was not quite so dramatic. In a number of other countries, there was consultation of the 'usual suspects', the third sector organisations that had previously been involved in the formation of social inclusion policy.

In *France,* the government consulted the CNLE (National Committee for Policies in the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion), which includes the largest associative networks in the fight against exclusion (UNIOPSS, ATD Quart-Monde, Fapil[8], Fnars, Médecins du Monde, Secours Catholique, and Secours Populaire Français), ministry officials and elected representatives.

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[8] Fnars is the National Federation of Associations for Social Reintegration; Fapil is the Federation of Association for Promotion and Integration through Housing.

In *Germany*, the most important third sector organisations involved in setting up the NAP were the umbrella organisations of the German Free Welfare Associations and the EAPN-Germany, who together set up a joint working committee to produce common statements. This was a unique co-operation. However, as the Free Welfare Associations are the most important members of EAPN-Germany, the committee basically consists of the Free Welfare Associations, and it is all much less spectacular than it sounds. In addition, some user groups were included.

In the *Netherlands*, the main actors involved were the members of the Social Alliance (a network for the fight against poverty and social exclusion, members of which include churches, trade unions, groups for immigrants and the chronically ill, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army), the EAPN-Netherlands (which, in contrast to its European counterparts, is composed solely of user groups), and a number of smaller organisations. The EAPN is itself a member of the Social Alliance, so the latter in practice included most of the third sector organisations that were consulted.

In *Spain*, over five hundred actors were approached, on the basis of earlier involvement with the government department in question. These included members of PSANGO (the Platform of Social Action for NGOs), the Spanish Business Confederation for the Social Economy (CEPES), and the EAPN-Spain.

Box 1: Increased involvement of user groups

In some countries, the NAPincl process was important in strengthening user involvement. In Sweden, it was decided that there should be a user or client delegation within the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, a group to be headed by the Minister. In the UK, the preparation of the NAPincl 2003 was used to involve a broader range of actors, including those representing people with direct experience of poverty (despite concerns about representativeness and capacity). In Germany, some user groups also took part in the NAP consultation. In the Netherlands, the preparation of the NAPincl reinforced the position of the national EAPN branch, which is unique in being composed solely of user groups.

In the two remaining countries, Sweden and the UK, the NAP process did lead to a significant change in terms of third sector involvement.

In *Sweden*, the Open Method of Co-ordination modified the way the policy making system worked. New actors were included in the process and old actors entered new arenas. In relation to the NAPincl process, a network of organisations came into existence, after which it was officially recognised by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. This was the Network against Social Exclusion, comprising both national organisations and others (for example trade unions, the

Swedish church and free churches, and co-operatives). It also included user groups (see Box 1). During the process, the responsible civil servant met with the Network against Social Exclusion, members from Eurocities in Sweden, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, the Swedish Federation of County Councils and other third sector organisations. The NAPincl was a unique process as it not only included new actors (particularly the user groups) but also brought together all relevant actors (government officials, local authorities and the third sector).

In the *UK,* for the 2001 NAP active third sector organisations included the EAPN-UK, ATD 4th World and some British-based NGOs[9] proceeding under the auspices of a specially convened English EAPN 'Social Policy Task Force'. The SPTF meets regularly to develop its NAP-related agenda and the organisations involved have held a number of events including NAP awareness seminars and workshops on indicators of child poverty. However, the overall approach changed significantly for the NAP 2003, and the preparation for this plan involved a broader range of actors than was the case with the previous plan, particularly through the involvement of devolved administration and of people with direct experience of poverty. The building of a new institution - a 'Participation Working Group' (PWG) aimed at involving in the policy process people with direct experience of poverty - is regarded as representative and even symbolic of this change. Yet as far as the traditional social partners were concerned, participation seemed to be essentially at the discretion of those involved, and there was no evidence of significant contributions.

All in all, with the exception of Italy, the NAP led to some form of consultation with third sector organisations. However, only in a few cases did this lead to the inclusion of actors that had not previously been involved in consultations concerning social inclusion policy.

Table 1: The inclusiveness of the NAPincl process

Countries	Impact
France	Medium
Germany	Medium
Italy	Low
The Netherlands	Medium
Spain	Medium
Sweden	High
UK	High

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[9] The first two are members of wider European groups with origins outside the UK (Brussels and Paris), while among the most active British organisations is Oxfam UK.

How were third sector organisations involved in the NAPincl process?

Inclusion is one thing; influence is another. It is clearly significant which third sector organisations were involved, but the impact depends on the manner of their involvement. Again, we will distinguish between low, medium and high. Low involvement denotes the situation in which third sector organisations were not, or barely, allowed to comment on the text of the NAP. Medium involvement indicates that they were allowed to comment on the draft versions of the NAP developed by others. High involvement refers to full participation in writing the documents from the very outset. The actual level of involvement differed significantly between countries, and in some cases changes the picture that we would get if we looked only at the number and types of organisations that were involved.

In three countries, the third sector was only involved at a very late stage, just before the documents were sent to Brussels, which meant that their influence on the content of the plans was very limited.

In *Italy*, as noted before, the involvement of third sector organisations virtually ground to a halt after the arrival of the Berlusconi government. For the 2001 version, there was an extensive schedule of meetings between the government and third sector organisations (a total of five between 2 March and 3 May 2001). By contrast, there were only two meetings with third sector organisations prior to the presentation of the 2003 NAP on 7 and 14 July 2003, that is to say, two-three weeks from the official deadline. The new approach appears to be one in which the plan is written and then its contents examined by the third sector afterwards, rather than participation in the writing as for the 2001 version. Both the *Forum del Terzo Settore* and the *CILAP-EAPN* have expressed strong dissatisfaction with this procedure through official comments.

In *France*, the government must normally consult the CNLE (National Committee for Policies in the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion)[10], which includes the largest associative networks in the fight against exclusion (UNIOPSS, ATD Quart-Monde, FNARS and FAPIL[11], Médecins du Monde, Secours Catholique, and Secours Populaire Français), ministry representatives and elected representatives. The government organised a CNLE meeting on the 2003 NAP, but only on the eve of its going to the French Cabinet, and after it had already been finalised. In December 2002, UNIOPSS had proposed to set up a consultation between the government and large

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[10] Founded in 1988, the CNLE is attached to the Prime Minister's office. The CNLE advises the government on the variety of issues relating to poverty and social exclusion.
[11] FNARS is the National Federation of Associations for Social Reintegration; FAPIL is the Federation of Association for Promotion and Integration through Housing.

associations dedicated to the fight against exclusion. This proposition was refused; consultation with the associations was meant to happen via the CNLE framework. It was only after the NAP process in June 2002, and at the initiative of UNIOPSS (not of the government) that two meetings to present the NAP were organised. Even so, the plan had already been written, which considerably reduced the input of the associations. The EAPN-France, which unites the main French associations around the UNIOPSS 'fight against poverty' commission and which took a keen interest in the NAP, was very critical of the process as well as the content of the 2003 NAP.

The situation in the *Netherlands* was in effect similar to the one in France and Italy, although in this case it seems to have been by accident rather than design. While the consultations for the NAPs 2001 and 2003 involved a large number of organisations, they were quite limited in their setup. The former was conducted at a very late stage of the process (a complaint confirmed by the 2002 evaluation of the NAPs). It was followed by a separate meeting of the organisations involved to exchange information. The short period of consultation was due primarily, according to the responsible Ministry (Social Affairs and Employment), to the late arrival of guidelines from Brussels. The consultation for the NAPs 2003 took place as early as May 2002, but then no second meeting followed, despite an assertion by the Minister for Social Affairs that 'social partners and non-profit organisations will have two opportunities to voice their comments'[12]. A first draft was circulated to third sector organisations in May 2003 with the request to respond within ten days. Of roughly sixty organisations, thirty replied. This even more limited form of consultation was, according to Ministry officials, the result of the uncertainty due to the formation of a new Cabinet and the policies that would be pursued over subsequent years. This uncertainty, in turn, was a result of the exceptionally turbulent national political situation related to the Pim Fortuyn assassination and two subsequent national elections within one year. It meant that while the Ministry did plan extensive consultations, as it has been typical in the Dutch tradition especially in this policy field, the procedure was cut short by external events.

In other countries, the process of consultation was less hurried and more elaborate. In these cases, the NAP process led to the establishment of new consultation procedures, although the initiative for drafting the document remained with public authorities.

In *Spain* the NAP was a tool for the introduction of a system for the 'collection of proposals made by the called entities'. Various organisations received an index card in which the following information was required: (a) proposals about new programmes, (b) activities done or (c) information about the sector that the entity represents. These index cards were different

depending on the type of actor (private non-profit, administrative body etc.). As noted in the previous paragraph, five hundred third sector organisations (those organisations included on the programme of grant allocation of the Spanish Ministry of Work and Social Affairs) were approached with letters and invitations, and were requested to complete the index cards. Forums integrating stable platforms and follow-up units were also formed. The Social Inclusion Commission (from the Council of Social Action NGOs[13]), constituted by Caritas, Red Cross and the Travellers' Association (FSGG) played an important role in this. According to government sources, the activities that specifically involved the third sector related to the draft and the follow-up process, as well as to the final writing and evaluation. Formally, there were no excluded third sector actors even if some organisations were not satisfied with their opportunity for involvement and did not answer the index cards sent by the national government.

In the case of *Germany*, one can identify a development in the consultation process. During the first NAP process, there was just one meeting between the different parties involved. While setting up the second NAP (for the period 2003-2005), a permanent advisory body with representatives of the Free Welfare Associations, representatives of the churches and the social partners, was established. This working group was consulted more regularly, which has resulted in a more structured way of communication between third sector representatives and ministry officials. However, it has to be taken into account that the co-operation between the government and these stakeholders is not new and existed prior to the introduction of the NAP, though now it has become more formalised.

Box 2: Levels of Government

The preparation of the NAPincl has mostly been a national level process. In several countries there have been efforts to involve regional and local authorities, for example the Swedish and Dutch municipalities, and the German Länder. The reverse was true in Spain, since formally only the regions are entitled to develop social exclusion policies, and information for the purpose of the NAPincl had to be transmitted upwards. Looking across the various countries, it appears that the most intensive exchange between the national and local levels took place within the (networks of) third sector organisations themselves.

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[12] From the *Voortgangsbrief Nationaal Actieplan ter bestrijding van armoede en sociale uitsluiting*, 6 December 2002.

[13] The State Council of Social Action NGOs (Consejo Estatal de ONGs) was founded in February 2001 by the government and consists both of officials from the ministries and representatives of Spanish Social Action NGOs. It is chaired by the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs and can be considered as the meeting point between the third sector and public administration. Its aim is to improve the co-operation in the development of social welfare policies (see TSEP Working Paper 2).

Finally, there were two countries where the involvement of the third sector was of a more intensive and far-reaching nature.

In *Sweden*, there are recognised routines to establish a base for government decisions, which the OMC has modified. The NAP process started with an information meeting, with participation from organisations within the third sector, from the national authorities and from municipalities. The purpose of this meeting was to spread knowledge and to gather relevant information and to anchor the Swedish strategy. Subsequently, the third sector (mainly through the network against social exclusion) took on a central place in the process. This open way of working was substantially different from the ordinary routine, which is to establish a report before the government makes a decision. There is no other decision process in the government with similar recommendations and guidelines regarding standards and evaluation. There was no resistance in Sweden towards forming social policy within the context of the National Action Plan, although it was thought the method needed to be adjusted to the national context. The willingness to incorporate the NAP process into Swedish politics can be explained by its resemblance to existing policy styles.

In the *UK*, as noted in the previous section, there was a significant change between the 2001 and 2003 NAPs. For the 2001 NAP, the government barely invested in the mobilisation of the third sector, a fact noted in the 2001 European Commission Joint Report on Social Inclusion: 'Local partnership is a strong theme in the UK approach, with a range of relevant actors closely involved in the delivery of policies. […] However, at the national level NGOs and the two main Social Partners are less closely involved'. The preparation of the 2003 NAP did not only result in the inclusion of a broader range of actors, it also opened up the policy process (in line with a more general development in UK government). The process has been deliberately engineered to both engender sufficient sustained progress with the specific demands of NAP development, while also providing opportunities for the exchange of views on other shared concerns. The actors now meet every two months, are in ongoing touch by e-mail and telephone, and feel free to discuss a range of poverty issues, not just the tasks pursuant to NAP implementation. It should be noted that such procedures are not part of the UK's traditional policy mode. One trade union respondent compared the British position negatively to the position in most European countries, where involvement was more taken for granted: 'there was less fuss about all this, they don't have to think about it so much'.

Overall, the results are quite mixed. They range from no involvement at all to full inclusion in the policymaking process. In a couple of cases (France and the Netherlands) the level of actual

involvement of the third sector casts a different light on the inclusiveness discussed in the previous section.

Table 2: The level of involvement of the third sector in the NAP process

Countries	Impact
France	Low
Germany	Medium
Italy	Low
The Netherlands	Low
Spain	Medium
Sweden	High
UK	High

What was the impact of third sector involvement on national social inclusion policy?

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Third sector organisations may have been involved, but did this have a real impact upon social inclusion policy? For reasons noted in the previous paragraph, this is difficult to judge, and we largely depend on the assertions of the actors involved. We have tried to assess (1) whether the NAP itself has had an impact on social exclusion policy, and if so, (2) whether the third sector has had a hand in this. Of course, despite the broad scope of our empirical material, one has to be careful in relying on the perceptions of single actors. Inevitably, government officials will assert that the third sector's input was adequately included. By contrast, the third sector is more likely to argue that its concerns were not sufficiently addressed. What we have tried to assess is whether the claims of different actors form a coherent picture; where there are strong points of difference, we will note them. In addition, we have examined the relevant points in the documentation regarding the NAPs. We will classify a country situation as low where it appears to have had no impact on the content of social inclusion policy; as medium where specific points have been included as a result of the third sector's involvement; and as high where third sector representatives have helped to shape the fundamental framework of national social inclusion policy.

In some countries, the production of NAPs in the field of social inclusion was an administrative exercise by government officials in response to European commitments, rather than an instrument for mobilisation. This pattern was strongest in Italy and France.

In *Italy*, the change of government meant that interest in the NAP declined, which is clearly visible in the NAP 2003. Not only did the third sector have no influence on it, it seems deliberately to have been excluded from it. The 2001 NAP included an entire paragraph dedicated to the third sector as 'parties to the plan'. By contrast, in the 2003 version, despite the fact that the new version is organised based on the same outline as in 2001, the third sector paragraph has disappeared altogether.

In *France*, the NAP was above all a summary of the set of government measures in the area of the fight against exclusion. In other words, it was hugely sensitive to changes in the government and the political majority. Moreover, it was more an administrative exercise in the face of European requirements than a real tool to encourage dialogue and action from administrations and associations in the fight against exclusion. On examination of the final document, it appears that not one measure has been modified or rejected following the single meeting with third sector representatives. However, it must be noted that this observation is denied by French anti-exclusion associations.

The situation in other countries has been somewhat more hopeful for the third sector. Here the NAP process was regarded as more than an administrative formality, even if it did not lead to significant revisions of or additions to existing social inclusion policy. Although generally third sector influence was limited, it did result in the elaboration of certain points which were of interest to (some) third sector organisations.

In *Spain*, social inclusion policy did not rank high on the political agenda of the Spanish Ministry of Work and Social Affairs. Retirement and ageing were considered more significant issues. According to ministry sources 'the battle of social exclusion is still an invisible element in Spain and it is not a priority.' This did not mean that social policies for inclusion did not exist, but that these policies were implanted at local or regional level. For the third sector, the effect of the NAP was stronger in terms of the consultation procedure than in terms of real impact on social inclusion policy. The Ministry collected the suggestions made by the third sector and included them in the final document, in their own words, 'as much as possible'. Yet according to third sector organisations, their comments were hardly recognisable. As one respondent noted, '[the administration] asked our opinion but it didn't listen to us'. In terms of the evaluation process in general, the third sector's involvement was solicited long after the writing of the drafts, not before it. However, again it has to be taken into account that social policy is - due to the constitutional setting of the country - not a task of the national level, but primarily a function of the regional and local levels of government. It may require an in-depth study of these other levels of government to provide a full assessment of the position of the third sector in this field.

In the *Netherlands*, anti-poverty policy came on to the political agenda during the mid-1990s, but interest declined with the economic boom at the end of the decade. The introduction of the NAP served to keep it alive and to broaden the issue from (financial) poverty to social exclusion. It did not lead to innovation though, since social inclusion has remained inextricably tied up with issues of employment and social security, which are discussed in other, politically more significant fora. According to one government official, contributions from the third sector 'were included as much as possible, but one cannot please 20 to 30 organisations. […] The fact that the NAP consists of existing policy makes it legally and financially difficult to change. The NAP is not the place for discussing money. That happens during the budget review. Unfortunately, not every organisation understands that'. However, there were some specific points which given additional emphasis because of input from the third sector, particularly the significance of voluntary labour and gender mainstreaming.

In *Germany*, there was basically the same situation. There was already a long tradition of anti-poverty policies, and the government integrated the NAP-strategy into their policy (specifically their reports on Poverty and Wealth in 2001 and 2005). The government perceived the NAP and the reports as proceeding in tandem. Third sector organisations were integrated into the process, albeit not systematically. Overall, their influence was limited to certain aspects that were finally included in the NAP, but would not have been included by the Government at its own initiative (for example attention to certain specific problems experienced by people in a situation of poverty).

In *Sweden*, the fourth objective of the European NAP - 'to mobilize all relevant bodies' - and the governments' financial support for social voluntary and handicap organisations were mentioned in the plans. However, as the Swedish welfare state already tends to invest heavily in social inclusion policy, the outcome of the NAPincl in terms of innovation has been quite limited. The process of setting up the plan had more impact on national policymaking than the content of the plan itself. However, the term 'action plan' raised hopes of deep and lasting reform in the social domain, which the NAP process has not been able to deliver. There has been a discussion about whether future plans should be developed according to a life-cycle approach or should have a more evaluative role.

In the *UK*, the 2001 NAP was a 'cut-and-paste' effort, a situation the responsible civil servants in the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) did not wish to deny, attributing this to the extreme constraints of time that they faced in assembling the materials. This changed with the 2003 NAP, where there was more room for issues deemed important by the third sector to be addressed. For instance, financial exclusion as a result of indebtedness was seen as having found its way into the

NAP as a result of the renewed process. There was a belief that at least some of the other issues not currently included but which concerned the sector might, through reasoned argument, come to be included on the agenda in the future. However, differences of opinion regarding fundamental aspects of social policy (especially on the role of markets) may hinder closer co-operation between the government and the third sector.

The overall impression is that in most cases, the NAPs have had a limited impact in terms of producing new policies and innovative ways of fighting social exclusion (see EAPN, 2004b), although it has helped the third sector to bring in certain specific points. It must be stressed that this is no judgement on the third sector's general role in shaping national social inclusion policies, merely on its role in doing so in the context of the NAPincl.

Table 3: The influence of the third sector on social inclusion policy through the NAP

Countries	Impact
France	Low
Germany	Medium
Italy	Low
The Netherlands	Medium
Spain	Medium
Sweden	Medium
UK	Medium

Has the NAPincl process strengthened links between national and European third sector organisations?

The NAP is intended to connect European and national policymaking, creating stronger links between the European and national authorities. Likewise, the NAP process may have resulted in (tighter) connections between European and national third sector organisations active in the same field. But has it? This has been investigated both by questioning respondents on this specific topic and by examining how they presented themselves in official statements (where available). Countries where the third sector organisations had no contact with their European counterparts are categorised as low; where only existing links were strengthened, medium; where new links were created and/or where national organisations presented themselves with reference to their European counterparts, high.

In the countries where the involvement of third sector organisations in setting up the NAP was low, *Italy*, *France* and the *Netherlands,* there was no noticeable increase in contacts between the national and European organisations. The NAP has appeared to strengthen the role of the EAPN networks, which by name and history have an explicit European link, and representatives of which meet at the European level on a regular basis (such as in the Round Tables on the NAPs). However, the same applies to *Spain*, where the NAP consultation process was more elaborate.

In *France*, UNIOPSS, the representative French member of EAPN France, has been in close contact with EAPN on the NAPs and has reported the lack of co-ordination. In the *Netherlands*, the Dutch EAPN also exchanged information with its European umbrella, and representatives took part in Round Tables where the NAP was discussed. However, its involvement in European initiatives is generally hampered by its lack of resources. In *Spain* the situation was quite similar: the whole process helped mainly to strengthen the role of the Spanish representatives of EAPN, who maintained links with their European umbrella.

In Germany and the UK, no new links between national and European organisations were created either, nor did organisations (other than the EAPN) present themselves as anything other than nationally focussed. However, existing links were strengthened beyond those that only related to the EAPN.

In *Germany*, the then chairwoman of the common working committee of EAPN Germany and the Free Welfare Associations emphasized the importance of exchanging experiences with EU groups and other national groups. But the German Free Welfare Associations in any case have well established links with Brussels, as they are members of their corresponding EU umbrella organisation (for example Diakonie is a member of Eurodiaconia, Caritas of Caritas-Europa; in addition, the German umbrella organisation of the Free Welfare Association is a member of ET Welfare and it has its own office in Brussels).

In the *UK*, the organisations involved in the Social Policy Task Force were Europe-oriented from the start, and some of the most significant members - such as ATD 4th World and Oxfam - originated from, or operate primarily outside, Britain. The NAP may have given rise to reinforced links with these umbrella organisations, but they did not cause a significant change in the relations between British and European third sector bodies.

The *Swedish* case was a clear exception, in that the European level was strongly represented in the national NAP process. Several of the organisations were more anchored in Brussels than in their Swedish membership. They presented themselves as members of EAPN and FEANTSA,

their European umbrella organisations, and did not emphasise their Swedish organisational roots. From the Department of Health and Social Affairs, there has been a strong feeling that these organisations gathered strength, argumentative force and legitimacy from their connections with European organisations and the Commission, rather than from their Swedish members.

Overall, the situation in most countries must be described as low to medium. Strengthened connections with Europe mostly derived from a stronger role of the national EAPN branch, and in some cases from the reinforcement of other existing ties. Only in the Swedish case were the European third sector networks emphatically present.

Table 4: The development of links between national and European third sector organisations

Countries	Impact
France	Low
Germany	Medium
Italy	Low
The Netherlands	Low
Spain	Low
Sweden	High
UK	Medium

Has the NAPincl process strengtheedn national third sector policy communities?

The NAP at the European level explicitly called for the mobilisation of the third sector in a broadly defined area. It may have led to a meeting between organisations that otherwise would never have met; it may have encouraged them to form coalitions against national governments, or with it; it may have raised awareness of the third sector as a specific identity. To use the terms of the TSEP-network, it may thus have strengthened or created horizontality within national third sector policy communities (see Appendix 1). This is a key issue within our project, and we address the question here in relation to the National Action Plans. We will classify countries as low when there was no significant impact of the NAP on third sector policy communities; medium, when it encouraged horizontality among those organisations active in the broad field of social exclusion; and high, where the effects spilled over into more general third sector horizontality.

In some respects, our findings on this research question mirror those for the previous one. Where the NAP consultation process was weak, there was little opportunity for organisations even to meet. This was especially visible in *the Netherlands*. In this country, there are barely any third sector specific horizontal policy actors, since the idea of a third sector as such hardly exists (an issue discussed more elaborately in the Dutch country paper, see Brandsen and van der Donk, 2005). The major partners in the NAP consultation were the Social Alliance and the EAPN-Netherlands, themselves networks of organisations that may be described as horizontal. However, it cannot be argued that the NAP process contributed to this. Not only were both networks established prior to the introduction of the NAPs, but the process itself also did not appear to encourage strengthened links. After the NAP 2001, there was a meeting between those organisations which had submitted comments, but there was no such meeting after the 2003 NAP, and the consultation itself included only a single meeting and largely consisted of requests for written input.

In Italy, France and Germany, there were hints of horizontality, which never transformed into anything substantial in relation to public policy.

- In *Italy*, interestingly enough, the outright refusal to involve the third sector in the NAP formation process produced a counter-reaction. It was an occasion for more networking among Italian third sector peak associations and federations in order to complain about the government's behaviour. However, reluctance to produce a joint document as a response prevented the potential of this third sector network from transforming itself in a more effective policy actor.

- *France* shows a similar storyline. The CNLE (National Committee for Policies in the fight against poverty and social exclusion) was not consulted, which was a blow against horizontality. In response, though, members of Alerte (an umbrella organisation comprising the main association against social exclusion) became active in asking the government to organise a consultation process.

- In *Germany*, the Free Welfare Associations and the EAPN-Germany worked together for the production of the NAP and formed a new working committee. However, while this was an unprecedented phenomenon, we must again note that the Free Welfare Associations are important members of the EAPN-Germany, although other organisations active in this field are also among its members. The NAP therefore did encourage horizontality, but only to a limited extent.

- In *Spain,* the third sector entities with an important role in NAP (to the extent that was possible) already made up the State Council of NGOs (and in particular the Inclusion

Working Group). In this sense, there was a connection with horizontal third sector bodies, but there is no indication that the NAP process itself in any way strengthened links or encouraged co-operation.

In the UK and Sweden, the impact of the NAP was stronger, although it did not reach beyond certain sections of the social inclusion policy community.

- In *the UK*, the SPTF associated with the NAP process provided a new focal point for actors in and around EAPN England, and across the UK as a whole. Yet the significance of this must not be overstated. Despite the changes which led to a more inclusive involvement of the third sector, the SPTF still perceives itself as a very fragile body. It not only has a chronic lack of resources, but also is not well known outside the small group of specialists who constitute the European strand of the British poverty policy community. Its members jokingly refer to the NAPs as the 'government's best kept secret'. The lack of publicity means that any effects of the NAP on general third sector policy communities is negligible. Its impact remains confined to the Europe-oriented organisations active in the field of social exclusion.

- In *Sweden*, the 'Network against social exclusion' could certainly be described as horizontal. Its members are national third sector organisations active in the field of social inclusion, but also trade unions, the Swedish church and free churches, and co-operatives. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, although in charge of the NAP, was not involved in the formation of this network, which arose out of initiatives from the organisations themselves. This development fits into an emerging pattern within the Swedish third sector, yet there are no clear indications that it has been influential in relation to these general events. The effects of the NAP seem to have been confined to those organisations active within the field of social inclusion policy.

Therefore, the impact of the NAP on relations within the third sector appears to have been limited. Even in those cases where the impact was highest, its effects did not spread beyond those organisations that were directly involved.

Table 5: The impact of the NAP on national third sector policy communities

Countries	Impact
France	Low
Germany	Low
Italy	Low
The Netherlands	Low
Spain	Low
Sweden	Medium
UK	Medium

5. Comparative analysis

Fit or misfit?

Our empirical investigation into the impact of the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion shows a diversity of effects (see Table 5). These broadly correspond with the findings of the EAPN's internal inquiry among its members regarding the second round of the NAPincl (EAPN, 2003). Now we need to consider these findings in the light of the goodness-of-fit. To do this, one must of course first determine whether the NAP, as transmitted through the OMC, produces a fit or misfit with the seven countries under investigation. This is a complicated effort, which requires an assessment of (a) the dominant policy mode and third sector policy communities within each country and (b) how these relate to European policy.

Table 6: The results of the empirical research on the impact of the NAPincl

Country	Impact on TS inclusion	Impact on TS involvement	Impact on social inclusion policy	Impact on European links	Impact on horizontality
France	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low
Germany	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Italy	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Netherlands	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Spain	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Sweden	High	High	Medium	High	Medium
UK	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium

For the assessment of national policy modes, we will draw upon the evidence and analysis in the country papers of the TSEP-project, although we clearly cannot do justice to them here. This description must take account of the different types of impact discussed in this paper (see section 3.1); the role and influence the third sector has in relation to policymaking, and the coherence of third sector policy communities.

In *Italy,* the governance of the third sector received a jolt with the arrival of the second Berlusconi government (Ranci et al, 2005). Generally, recognition of the third sector at the national level has been ad hoc and limited. Under the Centre-Left government in the late 1990s, closer co-operation seemed to be developing. However, the change of government at the beginning of the decade, with a shift from Centre-Left to Centre-Right, led to a decreasing State interest in co-operation with societal actors and third sector organisations. In that sense there was no correspondence between the NAP's mobilisation objective and the Italian government's position. The emerging horizontality among Italian third sector policy communities submerged again after the change of government. Looking at the impact of the NAP, it was low in all senses. It was created without consultation of the third sector, in line with the Italian government's approach. In fact, full adaptation to the EU objective of involving the third sector would have meant a complete turn away from the prevailing governance concept. In terms of third sector policy communities, there were some cross-cutting contacts, but of an ineffectual kind. In short, there was misfit in terms of policy mode, and the NAP appears to have had little impact.

In *the Netherlands*, the involvement of third sector organisations in the development and delivery of social policy is a long-established tradition (Brandsen and Van de Donk, 2005). Its third sector ranks among the largest in the world. However, it is mostly organised along the lines of vertical policy fields and there are few horizontal links cutting across the sector's heavily vertical structuration. The third sector policy community in the field of social inclusion is therefore not part of a general third sector community. When we look at the policy modes of the EU and the Netherlands, it is clear that they are basically in agreement as far as the significance of mobilisation is concerned. When we look at the impact of the NAP, one can see that it was generally medium in terms of the role of the third sector, and low in terms of linkages. The consultation procedure was classified as low, but here one should take account of the unusual situation during the period in which we conducted our research. Under normal circumstances, it would probably have been classified as medium and turned out more like the German situation. The process did confirm and strengthen the third sector's role as co-producers of social inclusion policy, but only to a limited extent, and it did not forge any new links between the fragmented third sector policy communities. There was fit in terms of policy mode, a limited effect on the national policy mode, and no effect on the third sector policy community.

In the case of *France*, the third sector has had mixed fortunes in recent years (Fraisse, 2005). In terms of organisational links, the area of social inclusion is quite well integrated with a more general third sector policy community. Co-operation between government and third sector in this field is not unusual, witnessed, for example, by the elaboration of the bill for the fight against social exclusion in 1998, during which associations were actively involved. Yet for the NAPincl there was no significant consultation, which therefore presented a break with the usual approach. This is well illustrated by the third sector's strong reaction to the nature of the process. The way the French government dealt with setting up the NAP is perfectly explainable as the habitual method through which French officials deal with EU tasks, but in the field of social inclusion - traditionally a subsidiary area - it bypassed third sector consultation that could otherwise have been expected. The spillover effects on the third sector policy community were negligible. In conclusion, there was a fit and the impact of the NAP was limited in all senses.

Germany has *de facto* a strongly developed third sector tradition - although not recognised as constituting a policy specialism per se - by virtue of the significance of the subsidiarity principle in German society (Appel et al, 2005). At the heart of its social welfare component stand the Free Welfare Associations (FWA), which have long had a dominant role in welfare state provision - including in relation to social exclusion specifically - although in recent times they have lost ground to for-profits. Being both pivotal and largely state-funded, the FWA maintained close links with the government. Their participation in policymaking would have been self-evident even without the NAP, though the latter did allow the entry of some smaller third sector organisations. In that sense, the process could even be regarded as creating a horizontal third sector policy community, but given the dominance of the FWA this should not be exaggerated. On the whole, there was fit and the effect of the NAP was one of minor revisions to the existing policy mode, and no significant change in the structure of the third sector policy community.

In the case of *Spain*, although traditionally weakly organised, there was a fast growth and development of non-profit organisations within the distribution of social welfare resources from the second half of the 1980s (Montagut, 2005). Moreover, this has been associated with the development of a form of social welfare oriented horizontal third sector policy community, organised around the 'social action NGO' construct. It can be said that almost all the programmes and services of third sector organisations are directly or indirectly linked to the goals of social inclusion policy. Consequently, the third sector is taken into consideration by political institutions when it comes to creating programmes for social inclusion. Yet social inclusion policy has traditionally been a regional affair, and there were no established consultation structures between government officials and the third sector at the national level. In the sense that consultations did take place and consultation procedures were established, the impact of the EU guidelines is

clearly visible. As far as third sector policy communities were concerned, the NAP did not lead to significant changes. In other words, there was a misfit (concerning the national level), a moderate impact in terms of policy mode, and a limited impact on the third sector policy community.

In *Sweden*, the popular mass movement has been central to the understanding of the third sector and its activities (Olsson et al, 2005). It is also of growing importance in providing mainstream services within core domains of the welfare state. In the course of the 1990s, third sector organisations began to view themselves as having common goals and politics, which had not been the case before, and which led to the emergence of a third sector horizontal policy community. However, policymaking has traditionally been the prerogative of national and local authorities. In that sense, the third sector took on a far more prominent position during the NAP process than hitherto. The process was opened up for charities and other third sector organisations in this field, which added to its inclusive nature. We can therefore say that there was a misfit and that the impact of the NAP was strong in terms of policy mode and in terms of third sector policy community, although it is unclear how its influence extends beyond the field of social inclusion policy.

In the *UK*, the notion of a third sector per se - using the 'voluntary [and community] sector construct' - has been mainstreamed in policy, achieving a level of policy prominence not paralleled in the other countries under investigation (Kendall, 2005). Public policy in this area has built on historic foundations in recent years to underpin an increasingly elaborate and specialised policy community specifically geared towards its support. However, legally structured direct participation in policy design by the third sector is not part of the UK tradition, with arrangements tending to evolve in an *ad hoc*, pragmatic way in social exclusion, as with other policy specialisms. To the extent they introduced a new basis for institutionalisation and predictability, the National Action Plans were a novelty on British shores. The NAP 2003 especially gave rise to a striking change in the formation of social inclusion policy, with more intensive and broader third sector participation. However, these developments remained confined to a small subset of specialist poverty-oriented actors and did not affect the more general specialist third sector policy community (with just one or two contacts made remaining essentially undeveloped). Overall, there was misfit, quite a high impact of the NAP on the policy mode and third sector organisations involved, but only in small circles.

Interpreting the effect of the NAP

Table 7 summarises the results of our enquiry. So what can we say with regard to our hypothesis? To repeat, the adaptation hypothesis states that actors will react in response to a misfit. With the exception of Italy, the findings appear to confirm this. In Spain, Sweden and the UK, where Europe introduced a novel element, the policy mode changed significantly. In countries such as France, Germany and the Netherlands, the mobilisation of the third sector in social inclusion policy was to be expected, and where the European objective had any impact it was merely to confirm and (to some degree) extend a domestic tradition. The hypothesis therefore appears to be confirmed.

Table 7: Fit/misfit and the impact of the NAP

Country	Fit or misfit?	Impact on policy mode	Impact on TS policy community
France	Fit	Low impact	Low impact
Germany	Fit	Low impact	Low impact
Italy	Misfit	Low impact	Low impact
Netherlands	Fit	Low impact	Low impact
Spain	Misfit	Medium impact	Low impact
Sweden	Misfit	High impact	Medium impact
UK	Misfit	High impact	Medium impact

However, we must be cautious in deciding how to interpret this finding, as the influence of the EU cannot easily be distinguished from domestic developments. For instance, in Britain a greater role for the third sector was already on the agenda of the Labour government in 1997, well before the NAP process started. Generally, national relationships with the third sector have proved quite vulnerable to political swings. Without a change in leadership within the UK Department for Work and Pensions, the impact of the NAP might have been far less strong. Likewise, the government changes in France and Italy, and the political turbulence in the Netherlands affected the NAP process significantly. The European plan may have favourably changed the opportunity structure for third sector organisations in some countries, yet the attitude of policymakers with regard to this matter seems to have been a crucial intermediary variable.

One could argue that, if the changes inherent to the NAP were in line with what policymakers wanted anyway, there was basically a good fit in most countries and that this makes a goodness-

of-fit analysis of less interest. That conclusion hinges too strongly on an interpretation of Europeanisation as a form of implementation, and on associated concepts such as compliance and pressure. European policy may have facilitated or revised national processes of change, and in that sense the (type and scope of) misfit may matter. If this is the case, then one should not analyse the NAP in terms of an alien influence that may or may not cause change at the domestic level. Rather, it should be explored in terms of how it was woven into national processes already set in motion. It shows clearly how the Open Method of Coordination differs from the Community Method, and it is perhaps a call to change our analytical instruments accordingly.

Interestingly enough, the NAP seems to have had little impact on third sector policy communities across the board. In France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain nothing changed, whereas in the UK the effect remained confined to the small community of Europe-minded third sector organisations involved in social inclusion policy. One could argue that this is merely a reflection of national third sector policy cultures. Where they were fragmented, any effects of the NAP remain within the affected fragment; where they were integrated, effects were incorporated as a matter of course; but in no instance did the NAP have a significant bridging effect.

6. Conclusion

Our empirical findings suggest that the NAP did not cause radical changes across Europe in terms of mobilisation, and hardly any change in relation to third sector policy communities. However, such an observation is meaningless without a firm understanding of national contexts. Where mobilisation of the third sector was not part of the national tradition, the NAPs did generally have an impact in encouraging and guiding ongoing processes (as also concluded in EAPN, 2004a). Where participation of the third sector was a feature of the regular policy process in the field of social inclusion, the NAP led to certain revisions and extensions of existing procedures. One should perhaps abstain from too single-minded a focus on the implementation of the instrument, and consider its potential impact in broader processes of learning and development.

On the whole, the TSEP network has yielded a wealth of material on the NAP process, but one should interpret this with due caution. To begin with, potentially important influences on third sector involvement have been left out of this analysis. In particular, the aspect of cross-national policy learning should be considered further as OMC provides the potential for learning processes (Bulmer and Radaelli, 2004). We have now considered the countries in isolation, but this ignores the 'naming and shaming' effect of the OMC, which may encourage both autonomous learning

and policy transfer. A second qualification is that our research can only be work in progress when only two National Action Plans on Social Inclusion have appeared so far. Further NAPs will be written. Where in some countries the procedure altered from the first to the second NAP, there are already indications that the third round of NAPs will lead to a stronger position of third sector organisations. If learning processes are indeed in progress, they will probably take more than two rounds to show their effects properly. It will take an assessment over a longer period to find out the real impact of the NAPs. The TSEP-project has given handholds for future comparative study that will help to bring these effects more clearly into focus.

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Appendix 1: Working Glossary
Version of 23 June 2005

Case refers to the TSEP unit of analysis in relation to public policy as a multi-level process: there are 'closed cases', being particular policy events/programmes chosen to capture a range of policy modes and stages in the policy process of relevance to the third sector in Europe; or 'open cases', which are more thematic and diffuse in character. The former include the European Statute of Association; Global grants for social capital; the Convention/Constitution; National Actions Plans for social exclusion and employment; and the United Nations Year of Volunteering; the latter include Services of General Interest; and the European Structural Funds and the third sector at the sub-national level.

Coalition refers to alliances of policy actors, who can be individuals or organisations, who come together to pursue shared values, concretely expressed in policy change or policy perpetuation goals. Understanding the functioning and roles of such coalitions in national, EU or multi-level contexts requires accounting for the nature of their values and goals; the economic, political and cultural resources they are able to mobilise, and the political opportunity structure within which they operate. In the TSEP network, research effort has been directed at describing and analysing coalitions formed and perpetuated by full or part time *specialist third sector-specific policy actors*.

Collective noun refers to the language used by domestic or EU level actors to group organisations sectorally at a level higher than *vertical policy fields*, and involving some implicit or explicit reference to ownership and control not reducible to either the market or the state. In some countries the collective noun and associated expressions involves a relatively stable or dominant language supported by formal or informal institutions and practices, while in others there is a more open field, with competing concepts and formulations, often fluidly co-existing and interacting with one another. Examples in Europe at the EU and national levels of expressions sometimes used in this way (and sometimes also used in other ways) include associations, [social] [action] NGOs, non-profit sector, nonprofits, organised civil society, popular movements, social economy, social enterprise, solidarity economy, third system, voluntary [and community] sector.

Community method has been described by the Commission as 'a procedure leading to decisions or Act, involving balanced participation [at the EU institutional level] between Council, the European Parliament and the Commission'. It was the 'classical' or 'traditional' method of processing EU policy in the second half of the twentieth century, but in the twenty-first is increasingly supplemented or displaced by the *Open Method of Co-ordination* which rebalances control away from the EU institutional level, towards Member State level actors.

Cross-cutting is used as shorthand for third sector relevant cross-cutting, and refers to concepts/beliefs or policies/practices/actions which are not confined to within *vertical policy fields*, but which are (a) either held to be relevant or applied discretely but according to common principles within two or more vertical policy fields, especially in the social welfare domain; or (b) which are held to be relevant/applied as a matter of 'generic' policy. Policy development in relation to these processes typically involves *specialist third sector-specific policy actors* within and outside the State, forming relatively loosely coupled 'policy networks' and/or a more formally institutionalised and recognised 'policy community' nominally involving a core of shared values and beliefs expressed in political rhetoric and/or the technical codified discourse associated with specialist policy instruments. The result can be the creation and perpetuation of a policy space jointly recognised by these experts as constituting the subject matter of third sector policy (using some collective noun) which is not reducible to the policy contents of a particular vertical field.

Domain Used to specify the level of policy between vertical policy field and the macro system of policy and politics. In relation to the third sector, the domain which TSEP has demonstrated is of most (but not universal) relevance is the *social welfare domain*.

European problem set refers to the cluster of high salience European policy issues or problems with which the third sector has most consistently been linked by policy actors at European, national and sub-national levels. Included here are *governance*; *social exclusion*; and unemployment. Third sector organisations may be seen as 'partners' whose contributions can and should be mobilised as part of the process of problem management, or problem solving.

Governance has multiple and contested meanings; but at its broadest, it can be used to refer to institutionally ordered arrangements for shaping the processing of policy at the key stages of agenda setting, decision making, implementation and evaluation. It tends to be linked to steering or strategic - as opposed to tactical - processes; patterned as opposed to unstructured relationships and interactions; and to be associated with such values as accountability, transparency, and effectiveness. The ways in which the third sector is linked to governance varies significantly across contexts, but often considered in scope are issues both in relation to internal governance - the design and application of appropriate legal structures and micro-constitutional models in the light of third sector specificities such as voluntarism and non-profit-distribution; and issues in relation to external governance, including how the third sector can and should fit as an actor at each of the policy stages, wherein it is one policy actor amongst many.

Horizontal policy is synonymous with *cross cutting* policy. Note that there are 'pure' cases of horizontality, whereby policies or concepts are related to the entire third sector as defined in the relevant collective nouns. But we *also* include as 'horizontal' narrower-in-scope concepts or policies which cut across some but not all *vertical fields*. In particular, overarching social welfare regime policies and practices, social inclusion policies and community development policies can be considered in scope, even if not extending outside the *social welfare domain*, to the extent that they necessarily suggest, involve or imply, participation by the third sector and its stakeholders.[1]

Industry-specific policies that are relevant to a particular *vertical field* only.

Mainstreaming is shorthand for *public policy* mainstreaming and refers to a situation in which the mainstreamed policy issue or problem (here, the third sector) is not only supported by technical institutions, but has high political and social visibility, and is seen by systemically powerful actors as of high generic public policy salience.

Multi-level process refers to how the European, national and subnational levels of public policy are inter-related. The extent to which this constitutes third sector policies is examined in the TSEP network by policy *cases*. Note that this is not synonymous with multi-level *governance* - which is typically used as a framing concept to claim that substantive power is situated at more than one level. The extent to which multi-level processes involve a reconfiguration towards multi level governance is treated as an open question for research.

Open Method of Coordination is based on mutual agreement of policy objectives by Member States; the development of common guidelines, indicators, and targets; benchmarking of performance and exchange of good practices, formulation of national action plans; and peer review and joint monitoring of implementation in an iterative multi-year cycle. It increasingly supplements and even displaces the *Community Method*.

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[1] Note that other writers use this term differently, often including *intra-vertical* policy field *multi-sector* initiatives as horizontal, while we do not consider *per se* as the core subject matter of our network. However, indirectly such policies may lead indirectly to our notion of horizontality, through spillover effects or *ex post* political construction of policy, as noted elsewhere.

Path dependency Refers to how historical policy decisions create a 'policy legacy', which can have long term consequences for the possibilities of current and future policies

Policy is used in TSEP as shorthand for *public policy*.

Policy entrepreneurship refers to actions taken either to deliberately change, or to deliberately protect, public policies - here, third sector specific policies. Such efforts typically involve the formation of *coalitions* between individuals or organisations, or both and are heavily constrained by national political opportunity structures. In the TSEP network, research effort has been directed at describing and analysing the entrepreneurship of full or part time *specialist third sector-specific policy actors*. Most horizontal third sector policy entrepreneurship takes place at the national level or below, but there are some individuals and organisations that specialise at the EU level, and some who operate on multiple levels.

Policy field is shorthand for *vertical policy field*.

Policy mode is a helpful way of recognising and analysing the different types of broad policy approaches that jointly constitute the highly complex EU public policy process. Examples of distinctive modes are the *community method* (relevant to the third sector in the European Statute of Association case) and the *open method of co-ordination* (relevant to the third sector in the case of National Action Plans for *social exclusion* and employment).

Policy learning refers to the impetus for policy change which occurs when actors adopt strategies, or various forms of policy belief, in the light of experience; or policy changes due to new information and analysis, generated by *policy entrepreneurs*, perhaps operating as part of *coalitions*.

Public policy comprises two elements. Unless otherwise qualified, 'policy' refers to intended courses of action which are explicitly and proactively articulated by actors with significant levels of political authority, and reflected in patterned policy discourse, events and institutions. If past policy decisions continue to be relevant because (due to *path dependency*) they shape current administration practices, resource allocation and the distribution of power, but they are *not* actively sustained and pushed as a categorical, proactive policy, they can be described as 'latent', that is implicit, policy. 'Public' refers to institutions and events involving 'that dimension of human activity which is regarded as requiring governmental or social regulation or intervention, or at least common action' (Parsons, 1995).

Social exclusion has been defined by the European commission as 'referring to the multiple and changing factors resulting in people being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society. Poverty is one of the most obvious factors, but social exclusion also refers to housing, education, health and access to services'.

Social welfare domain This corresponds to the 'welfare state regime' policy space. It is a 'meso level' concept nested within, and developmentally bound up with, the prevailing generic national political and public policy system, while being broader than a single *vertical field*. Within it are the family of 'human services' or 'social [welfare] services' whose vertical components include ICNPO groups 4 ('personal' social services, or social care, and income maintenance), group 6 (development and housing, including employment & training), part of group 7 (advocacy, to the extent it is geared towards social welfare; and excluding political parties); group 3 (health) and group 2 (education and research). Many of these services are (jointly) implicated in tackling *social exclusion*. Note that this formulation is not limited to 'service provision' in the sense of ownership and management of establishments (as with provision of care homes, social housing) but inclusive also of social welfare oriented activities in addition to/separate from direct services, including social welfare oriented self-help and community based activities, advocacy

(campaigning on social policy issues, and individual clients' rights etc), involvement in social welfare and social policy design, monitoring etc.

Specialist third sector-specific policy actors are the carriers of purposive *third sector specific policy* who claim to hold relevant expertise and knowledge. They may be full time specialist individuals or organisations, but such actors are often part time, fulfilling this role separately and/or in conjunction with other contributions to the policy system (particularly in the social welfare domain). They operate within and outside the State, forming relatively loosely coupled 'policy networks' and/or a more formally institutionalised and recognised 'policy community', or 'policy communities'. At a minimum they share a language involving third sector collective nouns (otherwise they cannot be specialists); they may nominally claim to share a core of values and beliefs in relation to the third sector, expressed in political rhetoric and/or the technical codified discourse associated with the relevant specialist policy instruments. The result can be the creation and perpetuation of a policy space jointly recognised by these experts as constituting the subject matter of third sector policy (using some collective noun) which is not reducible to the policy contents of any particular vertical field[2].

Spill over effects Policy effects and actions designed to apply in one domain or field which have consequences once adopted - and thus implicitly or explicitly, shape policies in other domains or fields.

Third sector at the highest level of generality refers to organisations situated between the market and the state in terms of ownership and control. TSEP needed more specificity to initiate research into this construct as an object of policy: It was therefore provisionally taken to include those organisations which are self-governing and constitutionally independent of the state; do not involve the distribution of profits to shareholders; and benefit to a significant degree from voluntarism. This was an initial orienting working definition of the third sector - but in application, this has had to be sensitive to national conditions, since our unit of analysis has been the actual existing horizontal policy community or communities with its associated constructs. In other words, the specific 'indigenous' conceptualisation (or conceptualisations) deployed in practice was a question to be determined empirically, not *a priori* imposed. By referring to more than one collective noun, and the relative salience of each from the perspective of policy network or community members, we are also able to reflect differences within countries, where boundary disputes and the contest between competing definitions is itself part of the policy process (since notions putting the accent on 'civil society', 'voluntarism', and 'social economy' for example, typically co-exist).

Third sector [specific] policy is usually used either as shorthand for *horizontal* third sector policy; or to refer to the sum of horizontal cross cutting policies, policies which are partly horizontal and partly vertical. As used in this network, it is by definition concerned *only* with public policy that is horizontal to at least a certain extent. It thus can contain both 'deliberate' policy designed or constructed for the third sector, and policies which are more accidental, *ex post* constructed as third sector policies, and therefore seen as relevant by actors who style themselves as third sector stakeholders. Third sector specific policies are sustained by policy networks and/or policy communities, where the latter are characterised by specialisation, involving claims-making in relation to expertise. In these specialist networks and/or communities, the third sector is often - but not always - coupled to problems and issues associated with the social welfare domain,

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[2] Policies may not be cross cutting *initially* if developed independently within vertical policy fields; but *become* cross cutting if *ex post* 'joined up' by significant policy actors coordinating across or (if powerful) able to authoritatively transcend vertical policy fields. These policies can then be viewed after, and only after, the formative, politically constructive event of 'joining up' by policy actors as jointly constituting a shared 'horizontal' policy; otherwise they are considered not to exist as 'horizontal', or only 'latent'.

particularly social exclusion and unemployment. The agendas of these policy networks or communities tend to include reference to the third sector's policy environment in terms of legal structures and wider governance arrangements; institutional processes for mediating third sector-public sector/State relations; arrangements for involvement across policy stages and policy modes; and the promotion of voluntarism, including volunteering.

Third sector stakeholders include actors who consciously have a significant role in third sector policy. It includes third sector organisations themselves, but also other actors including politicians, public officials, academics, the media, trade unions and (for-profit) business.

Vertical policy field Policies that are developed and apply essentially *within* a particular field or domain: here, horizontal institutions may differentiate between organisations but in the background or incidentally, rather than as the focal point of policy activity. To define 'field' boundaries, we follow the standard industrial classification adapted to account for the specificities of the third sector, as represented in the International Classification of Nonprofit Organisations (ICNPO). Policies which relate to a particular Group or subgroup of the ICNPO are considered 'vertical'; while those which relate to two or more fields may be considered horizontal, either 'narrower' or 'broader' according to the range of fields in scope. Empirically in Europe, relevant policies are often (but not always) closely linked to the *social welfare domain*.

Further Reading

Kendall, J. (2003). *The Voluntary Sector: Comparative Perspectives in the UK*, Routledge, London.
Kubler, D. (2001). Understanding policy change with the Advocacy Coalition Framework: an application to Swiss drug policy, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 8(4), 623-641.
Parsons, W. W. (1995). *Public Policy: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Policy Analysis*, Edward Elgar, Aldershot.
Wallace, H. and Wallace, W. (2000). *Policy Making in the European Union*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
Zeitlin, J. and Trubel, D. (ed) (2003). *Governing Work and Welfare in a New Economy: European and American Experiments*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Appendix 2: Data Sources

Across all closed cases, at the <u>national level</u> some 174 primary data points were assembled so on average there were just under 30 sources of primary evidence per case. (The number varied significantly by case, reflecting, inter alia, variation in ease of access to informants (different processes are more or less open), intensity of actual policy activity, and the resources of the policy champion (see below).) Most of these data points were bi-lateral meetings with policy actors - either third sector bodies, policy makers within the public sector, or academics and other experts. Potentially relevant sources were identified using country-level Partners' familiarity both with the general third sector policy community or networks in their country, and by 'snowballing' from actors identified in earlier meetings. Relevant events and fora were also attended and observed, as deemed relevant by Partners. The evidence gathering at this level proceeded in stages. First initial descriptive information was collated. Second, basic common lines of questioning were pursued across all cases, as put forward by the TSEP co-ordinators. The conceptual background to these lines of questioning was an understanding of the policy process as likely to involve country-specific path dependencies, competing priorities between policy actors, and contested terminology and boundaries, but also the potential for policy learning and policy entrepreneurship (see Appendix 1). National researchers were therefore asked to identify the extent to which the case reproduced or deviated from established national patterns in terms of actors and processes, and why; and to explicate and explore any evidence in relation to either catalysed policy entrepreneurship, or learning processes.

Third, responsibility for cases were devolved to a 'policy champion' or champions, who took responsibility for developing and refining the line of enquiry and questioning, in the light of initial findings; the analytic policy literature specific to the case; and acting as lead author for subsequent papers. More details of this aspect are provided in the body of this paper.

At the <u>EU (Brussels) level</u>, our sources (relevant for all cases other than the UN IYV) have been an evolving mixture of (transcribed) textual data, meetings and observation, with some 70 data records assembled. The work on Brussels-based policy was assisted by the openness of many institutions, which has made it possible to meet many important informants and access a wide range of written sources such as policy documents, minutes and reports. Meetings were arranged with people who have taken formal and informal positions of leadership, or have long experience in this area within the Commission and other European institutions, in activist communities and among academic and professional commentators. These were only lightly structured, but were used to elicit in-depth accounts and commentary on the 'core' specific policy initiatives, as well as more general reflections on third sector policy activity over time. The researchers have also observed and participated in relevant events where possible.

Third Sector European Policy Working Paper Series

The background and motivation for the network's research efforts is set out in the first TSEP Working Paper. After this, a first group of critically examines the third sector's policy environment at the national level; a second set explores how a small number of specially selected European policy cases are processed at both the national and EU level; in addition, the more general topics of 'services of general interest' and ESF sub-national policy implementation are an additional focus of ongoing research in some countries under TSEP auspices.

TSEP 11 **The European Statute of Association: Why an obscure but contested symbol in a sea of indifference and scepticism?** Jeremy Kendall and Laurent Fraisse
June 2005, ISBN 07530 1891 8

TSEP 12 **The challenges of translation: the Convention and debates on the future of Europe from the perspective of European third sectors**, Catherine Will, Isabel Crowhurst, Ola Larsson, Jeremy Kendall, Lars-Erik Olsson and Marie Nordfeldt
June 2005, ISBN 07530 1892 6

TSEP 13 **From the European Social Fund Local Social Capital Pilots to mainstreamed Global Grants: the third sector and policy transfer**, Isabel Crowhurst, Ignacia Fernandez and Jeremy Kendall
June 2005, ISBN 07530 1893 4

TSEP 14 **The National Action Plan on Social Inclusion: an opportunity for the third sector?** Taco Brandsen, Emmanuele Pavolini, Costanzo Ranci, Birgit Sittermann and Annette Zimmer
June 2005, ISBN 07530 1894 2

TSEP 15 **The United Nations International Year of Volunteers: How a supranational political opportunity affects national civil societies**, Simone Baglioni
June 2005, ISBN 07530 1898 5

* forthcoming

Papers can be found at http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/TSEP/.

Background to the Centre for Civil Society

The Centre for Civil Society (CCS) is a leading, international organisation for research, analysis, debate and learning about civil society. It is based within the Department of Social Policy at the London School of Economics. Established initially as the Centre for Voluntary Organisation, the Centre has for over 20 years pioneered the study of the voluntary sector in the UK, development NGOs and civil society organisations throughout the world. The CCS is distinguished by its interdisciplinary and reflective approach to understanding whether and how civil society contributes to processes of social, political and policy change and continuity. Its core staff, research associates and visiting fellows cover a range of disciplines, including social policy, anthropology, political science, development studies, law, sociology, international relations and economics.

Objectives

Through research, teaching and policy analysis, the Centre adds to knowledge about the types, roles and contributions of civil society and social economic institutions in Britain, Europe and other parts of the world. The Centre's four major objectives are to:
  • Improve understanding of civil society and social economy institutions;
  • Inform policy-making at local, regional, national and international levels;
  • Provide academic and professional education; and
  • Create a vibrant intellectual community for the study of civil society/the social economy.

Research

Research is one of the Centre's core activities. It maintains a highly active and diversified research programme, ranging from basic theoretical approaches and empirical work to organisational and policy studies to historical analysis. Many research projects are inter-disciplinary and comparative. Examples of current and planned research projects include:
  • Mapping civil society;
  • The culture of giving in Britain;
  • The European Union and the voluntary sector;
  • Civil society and value changes in Britain;
  • History of housing associations;
  • Foundations in Europe;
  • Studying small, local organisations; and
  • NGOs and development.

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