Active Inclusion Networks

Learning Events Evaluation

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Contents

1   Introduction

1.1   This report evaluates the Active Inclusion Learning Network project. It is an evaluation of the network in terms of its learning activities. It does not seek to evaluate the projects that were included within the network in terms of their effectiveness. That was part of the focus of the research review that was undertaken by Professor Ioan Durnescu of the University of Bucharest.

1.2   Hence this report complements that review by Professor Durnescu.

2   Project Description

2.1   The Active Inclusion Learning Network is a project funded through the European Commission - Employment, Social Affairs and the Inclusion Directorate General (DG). The UK National Offender Management Service (NOMS) project managed it. This included organising the Platform 1, 2 and final events. The network brought together researchers, practitioners and policy makers to exchange information and experiences about helping disadvantaged individuals into sustainable employment.

2.2   The Active Inclusion Network is thus an example of a learning network whereby groups of practitioners and other experts with a shared common interest in a specific area are brought together in order to build the capacity of the practitioners and policy makers so that ultimately the result is better more effective interventions.

> *"The purpose of the network was to identify the good practice and the learning points from these good practices, in terms of active inclusion and how these learning points can be used in future programming."* (Interview)

2.3   In particular, the transnational network events have been organised around three themes:

- Troubled Families (Anti Social Behaviour; Offenders' Families; Long term Unemployed; Educational Problems)

- Disaffected Youth (Disaffected Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training; Disaffected Youth Inclusion and Empowerment)

- Marginalised in Communities (Homelessness, Physical, mental and learning difficulties, Offenders/Ex Offenders, Drugs and Alcohol abuse)

2.4   These transnational events were organised in three phases:

- Platform 1,

- Platform 2,

- Final Event

Platform 1

2.5 The UK's National Offender Management Service (NOMS) distributed a template across all EU member states to ESF Managing Authorities, NGOs, charities and Government departments asking for examples of best practice on the three themes noted above. Two hundred and ninety two returns were received from 17 different countries.

2.6 Three Platform 1 events were then held where European experts selected by NOMS scored all of these submissions to identify the best examples of good practice from across Europe. These Platform 1 events were:

- London, April 2014, Troubled Families – 98 returns were assessed

- Stockholm, May 2014, Disaffected Youth – 77 returns were assessed

- Athens, June 1014, Marginalised in Communities – 116 returns were assessed

2.7 Each event was tasked with selecting the eight (five plus three reserves) most innovative and effective projects for the particular theme in question. This was done as a peer review process as follows:

1 Plenary session – including a presentation on the systematic review for that particular theme

2 Marking of project applications – with experts working in pairs or small groups to score their allocated project returns, using a set evaluation grid for each project.

3 Group Discussion - The participants then discussed the projects they had marked together with the other experts around the following questions:

    i.   What are the innovative points that you can draw from these good practices?

    ii.   What are the learning points that you can draw from these good practices?

    iii.   What appear to be the critical factors that led to success of the good practices?

    iv.   What aspects would you like to be transferred in your own national context, and why?

v. Do you have further important points that you would like to stress from these practices?

4 The best eight surveys were then identified (five plus three reserves) from the ten surveys obtaining the highest scores at the previous marking session. There was flexibility on how this was done with some groups re-assessing the first marking using a new numerical scoring system, while others identified the top eight via a less structured group discussion.

Platform 2

2.8 Three Platform 2 events were held, again one for each of the themes set out above, as follows:

- Brussels, November 2014, Troubled Families

- Rome, December 2014, Disaffected Youth

- Bremen, February 2015, Marginalised in Communities

2.9 The aim of the Platform 2 meetings was to further assess the findings and the learning points from the best projects that were chosen at the Platform 1 meetings.

2.10 The PL2 meetings contained:

- A presentation of the systematic review of the theme in question and the findings from the relevant Platform 1 meeting

- Presentations on the selected best projects from the relevant Platform 1 event by their delivery organisation followed by discussions

- Small group discussions aimed at identifying the learning points, the projects' innovation, funding, transferability and the ESF implications. Followed by a presentation of these points to all the event participants followed by further discussions.

Final Event

2.11 The Active Inclusion Network Final Event was held in Rome in May 2015. Its aim was to bring together all the findings from the project and share these with invited participants who were either people who had been involved in the network at the Platform 1 and, or Platform 2 events, or

stakeholders with an interest and expertise in the themes that these events had covered.

2.12 The event was staged over two days and consisted of the following:

- A presentation on Italian policies for social inclusion

- A presentation on EU policy framework for Active Inclusion and the implications for the European *Social* Fund

- An introduction to the Active Inclusion Network project

- A presentation of the findings of the Research Report on Active Inclusion Learning Network

- First set of discussion forums – one each for the three themes of the Active Inclusion Network (i.e. Disaffected Youth, Marginalised in Communities and Troubled Families).

- Second set of three discussion forums covering: Employment and Social Enterprise; Funding and Partnerships; and Holistic (Wrap Around) Approaches

- A Panel discussion focused on building better links between the practice of interventions and policy formation

- Presentations from European Organisations covering Youth Justice, Homelessness and Gender Mainstreaming

- A presentation on the future of Active Inclusion in the context of the European Social Fund

3   Method

3.1   As an example of a learning network, our approach is to evaluate the Active Inclusion Networks project according to how it has built capacity, especially amongst practitioners so that the result is better more effective interventions.   The ways in which a learning network can help build capacity are effectively twofold:

- Firstly, via individual learning from the network's activities

- Secondly, by allowing the network participants to expand their range of contacts and build relationships with other individuals and organisations in the network.   These can then be drawn on when tackling future problems with the design or implementation of interventions.

3.2   We took these two causal mechanisms as the basis for our approach to this evaluation.   Our approach is to assess the Platform 1, Platform 2, and Final Event around the following themes:

- Effective organisation of the events

- Usefulness of events

- Project assessment

- Perception and Expectations

- Use of Learning and Impact

3.3   The more effective the organisation of the events the higher the chances that the right people will be in attendance, that individuals will be able to undertake valuable learning and relationship building.

3.4   This in turn should lead to higher ratings of the events by participants according to how useful they found them. The quality of the event organisation should also mean that participants' perceptions and expectations of the events align with what they actually experienced.

3.5   Ultimately what matters with any learning network, such as the Active Inclusion Network is whether the network has enabled members to learn, how members have applied this learning to their work, and what difference has this made to policies or specific interventions.

3.6   We have explored the above issues through a mix of evaluation forms handed out and filled in by participants at the seven Active Inclusion Network events, observation of the events, interactions with attendees at the events and six further interviews with people involved in the projects.

4 Platform 1 Events

4.1 The Platform 1 events bought together experts from across Europe to assess projects and interventions around three themes – troubled families, disaffected youth and marginalised in communities. Events focussing on each of the three themes were held between April and June 2014 in London, Stockholm and Athens respectively. Prior to these events a template was distributed across all EU member states asking for examples of best practice. At the Platform 1 events submissions were assessed and scored with the best making it through to be presented and discussed at Platform 2 events.

Participant profile and event organisation

4.2 Experts generally had interests which aligned with the themes they were judging, as can be seen in Figure 4.1. The sub-themes covered by each event (highlighted in grey), were those most commonly selected by experts as their main area of interest. There was, however, a breadth of expertise at each of the events.

Figure 4.1: What is your area of interest?

Interest / Expertise	Troubled Families London		Disaffected Youth Stockholm		Marginalised in Communities Athens	
	Main	Secondary	Main	Secondary	Main	Secondary
Offenders families	15	5	5	6	8	4
Multigenerational unemployment/Long term unemployment	20	3	4	7	4	6
Anti-social behaviour	13	7	7	2	10	5
Educational problems	12	6	7	4	8	4
Disaffected youth inclusion and empowerment	12	1	16	0	11	6
Disaffected youth employment, education and training	14	4	17	0	7	6
Homeless	7	6	5	3	9	5
Drug and alcohol abuse	6	7	2	8	10	5
Offenders/Ex-offenders	14	8	8	2	13	4
Mental health, physical and learning disabilities	11	7	5	7	5	9

4.3   The three Platform 1 event themes overlapped somewhat (which was acknowledged at the start of the process) and the experts selected had interests outside each specific platform theme. However, the vast majority (92% across all three events) reported that they felt they were placed in the correct sub-theme group.

4.4   Experts' main interests were most diverse in the Marginalised in Communities event which makes sense given how broad the subject matter was. In fact, it did appear in this event that there may have been too much to cover under the umbrella topic of Marginalised in Communities and this was something identified by attending experts.

Usefulness of events

4.5   The main headline finding to report is that across all elements of the programme, and all three Platform 1 events, on average 93% of attendees found them either "Quite useful" or "Very useful". This is broken down in Figure 4.2 below.

4.6   There were also clear patterns between different stages of the events. The discussion stages were deemed to be the most useful elements of the programme, as experts relished the chance to discuss and debate amongst each other in a more informal and less structured environment than some of the assessment and marking sessions. This was backed up by qualitative research.

4.7   The *collected practices marking* session and the criteria used to assess the interventions within this session were deemed the least useful across the Platform 1 events. This may be expected, as it was the stage in the day that experts were expected to work hard but does reflect issues - discussed below - that experts had with the scoring process. Furthermore, certain presentations at individual events were deemed not very useful but this is highly dependent on the speaker selected and is not something the Network can influence.

Figure 4.2: How useful were the following aspects of the event?

		Subject specific speakers/ presentations	Systematic review presentation	Collected practices marking	Subtheme group discussions	Whole group discussion/ feedback	Criteria used to assess the interventions
Troubled Families	Very useful	64%	62%	39%	59%	62%	29%
	Quite useful	36%	32%	53%	41%	31%	51%
	Not very useful	0%	5%	8%	0%	7%	20%
	Not at all useful	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Disaffected Youth	Very useful	61%	37%	47%	59%	65%	n/a
	Quite useful	28%	58%	42%	41%	18%	n/a
	Not very useful	11%	5%	5%	0%	18%	n/a
	Not at all useful	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	n/a
Marginalised in Communities	Very useful	45%	37%	47%	60%	73%	n/a
	Quite useful	55%	57%	43%	30%	27%	n/a
	Not very useful	0%	7%	10%	10%	0%	n/a
	Not at all useful	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	n/a

Quality of submissions

4.8 This was a cause of some complaint from experts across the three Platform 1 events, however, their reactions were noticeably more understanding in Athens when the methodology was explained at the start of the day. Explaining the justification for not including a pre-filter process did seem to be a good idea and one which the experts appreciated.

4.9 In the Troubled Families event, the only event where we asked this question, more submissions were reported to be good or very good than poor or very poor. However, the one consistent conclusion over all three

events was that the quality of the submissions was **extremely varied,** some were very good but others were extremely poor.

4.10   One of *Inclusion's* concerns was that submissions from British-based deliverers would have an advantage because, being English-speakers themselves, they will find it easier to describe what their project is doing. This reflects a concern raised by a number of experts: that they were marking the quality of deliverers' ability to describe their project as opposed to the quality of the project itself. Looking in more detail at certain projects at Platform 2 events should enable the Network to do this.

"It was easier for people from the UK and Northern Ireland to answer the questionnaires. We got many many answers from this country. I think it's normal because it was easy for them to write in English and it was easy to read those questionnaires. But really we had responses from many many countries and we chose practices from different contexts and from different countries even if there were more from English speaking countries than others." (Interview)

"Our problem was that English is not our personal language and more organisations would like to participate but due to language they could not take part or participate at all if they did not have good language skills." (Interview)

4.11   One way to combat the potential pro-British bias would have been to do more work to provide translation support to delivery organisations in their countries. However, experts felt that this bias did not manifest itself in practice and they may have, consciously or subconsciously, been harsher with their scoring of British interventions to counter this. Professional translations of the submission template and more support when translating submissions back into English would, however, have reduced any potential bias and increased the proportion of surveys received from mainland Europe.

"It would be easier for example if people can answer in their own languages. I think it would be useful to have translation resource in order to let practitioners express in their own language." (Interview)

Scoring process

4.12   As can be seen clearly from Figure 4.2, at the Troubled Families event the criteria used to assess interventions was judged to be the least useful

element of the day. Experts also reported on the day that the forms were quite difficult to use and might not always lead them to select the best proposals.

4.13 There were a number of concerns raised in the platform one events specifically relating to the scoring process; both on an individual basis and on how scores were aggregated.

4.14 When scoring individually (as pairs), experts felt that the scoring criteria did not always match up with the sections of the practice submissions. Whilst the rationale behind this was to get experts to read the whole submission and interpret it, they felt that certain practices were getting discriminated against for not answering questions they were not asked. Issues raised were around the size and budget of a programme, the problem it was attempting to solve as well as additional outcomes i.e. comparing outcomes against "what would have happened anyway". However, the subjective nature of the marking process did create good debate between experts.

4.15 There was also a particular issue around the 'innovation' measure. This was weighted heavily and experts felt this could skew selection towards projects that weren't particularly well-run or evaluated but were 'innovative'. They were also unsure how to score 'innovation' and whether or not this should be done consistently across the board. However, as above with the potential bias towards English-speaking deliverers, they may have been correcting for this with their marking.

> *"Should I be stricter with an innovation in the UK than in Italy or Poland?"*

4.16 In terms of aggregating the scores, there was some concern that if one pair marked particularly generously and another harshly, then the process would be biased against those practices randomly assigned to the harsher scoring pair. What could have been useful at both events would have been to run through the scoring process with an exemplar submission at the start of the sub-theme scoring sessions to **moderate** scoring.

4.17 In both the Marginalised in Communities and Disaffected Youth events this issue was raised by experts and, at least partially, resolved on the day. However, the exact process of this 'sensitivity testing' was thought up on the spot and, whilst this gave the experts the chance to contribute to the discussion, a set procedure could have been more rigorous. Robust methods of standardising the scores were observed such as getting larger
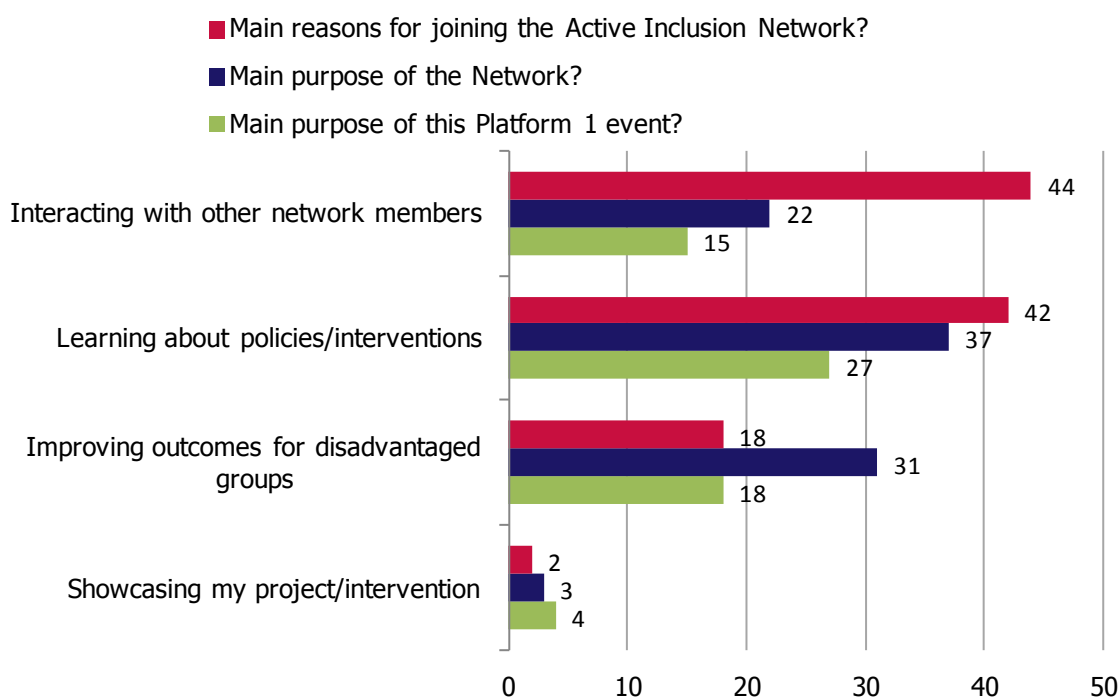
groups to re-mark practices with anomalous results from the first round of scoring, but not in every group which would have been preferable.

4.18 Furthermore, the afternoon session where experts were asked to choose two key elements under each of the five scoring themes did appear to be confusing and hard to facilitate. It was not always communicated to the experts at the start of this session that their answers would be used to mark surveys against the following day, and thus the answers they gave were not always appropriate to mark other practices against.

Perception and Expectations

4.19 Experts joined the network primarily to interact with other network members and to learn about policies and interventions. Improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups was also noted as a significant reason for joining the network, and as one of the main purposes of the network. Motivations for joining and views on the purpose of the network are shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Reasons for joining and view on purpose of the Network

Legend:
- Main reasons for joining the Active Inclusion Network?
- Main purpose of the Network?
- Main purpose of this Platform 1 event?

Category	Main reasons for joining	Main purpose of the Network	Main purpose of this Platform 1 event
Interacting with other network members	44	22	15
Learning about policies/interventions	42	37	27
Improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups	18	31	18
Showcasing my project/intervention	2	3	4

4.20 While the experts at Platform 1 events gave their primary reason for taking part as interaction with other network members, they felt that the

purpose of the network as a whole was to share learning and improve outcomes for disadvantaged groups.

"It was just a very poignant and relevant activity which I would attend again." (Interview)

4.21 The role of the partners of the Active Inclusion Network who facilitated the workshops at the events was to translate this motivation into action: helping to score and identify the submissions and identify best practice. This was communicated to the experts who recognised this and were aware of the hard work they were expected to do.

4.22 The experts were not particularly interested in showcasing their own interventions – which we would expect as it was not the purpose of their role at the Platform 1 events.

"The purpose was to learn from experiences around Europe and how to think about new projects for specific types of group. And for authorities to know better what works for specific groups. So it was really a learning network." (Interview)

4.23 Overall, the events were very well received by the participants.

"We managed to identify good practices and we managed to have good discussions about the principles behind those good practices. Then we were able to identify the learning points, the innovation and all these points we wanted to identify. The point is that we didn't find enough as the research on this area is quite slim - we were not able to find enough hard evidence but apart from that we were able to identify a number of good practices and baseline that against the literature. We managed to come with some useful ideas." (Interview)

4.24 On a five-point scale, where 5 is very good, 3 neither good nor poor and 1 very poor, we can see how the attendees rate the following aspects of the events below.

4.25 The first point to make is that with average scores above 4 – we know that, on average, attendees found **all aspects of the event between "Good" and "Very good".**

**Figure 4.4 Please rate the following aspects of the event**

	Troubled Families, London	Disaffected Youth, Stockholm	Marginalised in Communities, Athens
The overall meeting programme	4.25	4.26	4.55
Pre-meeting information/reading	4.39	4.50	4.60
Information/ reading provided at the event	4.19	3.84	4.43
Representation of network numbers	4.28	4.35	4.36
Running of the event	4.42	4.21	4.57
Opportunities to interact with others	4.42	4.47	4.75
Opportunities to raise questions/ queries	4.42	4.52	4.57

4.26　　As we can see there was a consistent improvement over time. A possible reason for this is that not only did the project partners who facilitated the events become more confident in the process and their role, but lessons were also learnt from the events as the project progressed. For example, in Athens, the rationale for the chosen methodology was clearly explained to experts, such as the absence of a pre-filtering process, which had been a cause of contention at the Disaffected Youth event.

Use of Learning and Impact

4.27　　The vast majority said they would be able to use something they had learnt from the event back in their day-to-day role. This was mainly trying new things out or lessons learned in a different context – spreading the learning across Europe. This is set out in Figure 4.5 below. Almost nobody left feeling they would be unable to apply something they had heard.

Figure 4.5: Will you be able to use anything you heard to improve delivery/policy now or in the future?
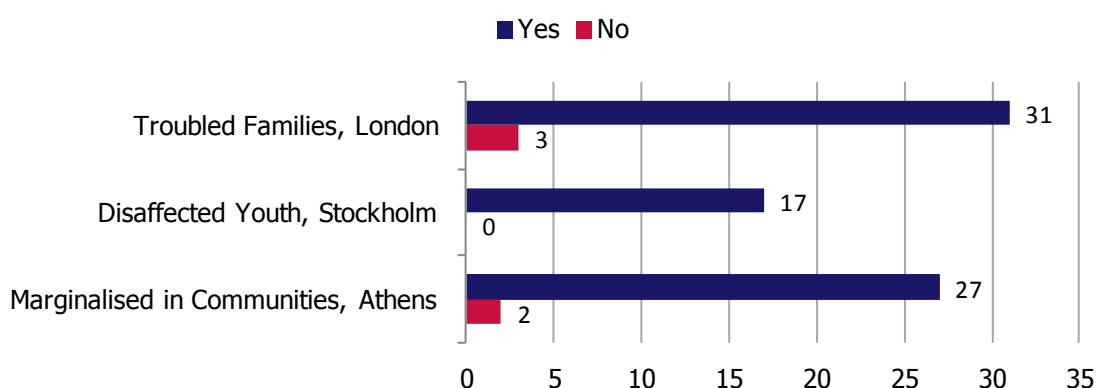
4.28   While the Platform 1 events was attended by experts those who made it through to the Platform 2 events also reported that the feedback they received on their submissions was useful.

"I was able to recognise everything we've achieved in such a short period of time and get some confirmation from the others that we were doing the right thing. It was really good to get that feedback and the Q&A from the experts." (Interview)

5 Platform 2 Events

Introduction

5.1 For the Platform 2 events we developed two evaluation forms one for the invited experts and another for the presenters – practitioners presenting the interventions they were responsible for.

Expert Profile

5.2 We asked experts at the three Platform 2 events which of the other Platform 2 events they would be attending. There was some overlap between the three sets of experts at the three events as shown in Table 5.1. For example, of the eight experts who filled in our evaluation form at the Troubled Families event in Brussels half were not attending any other Platform 2 events, with two attending both of the other Platform 2 events. The biggest overlap was between the events on Disaffected Youth and Marginalised in Communities with five experts attending both of these. Only two experts who responded to our evaluation survey attended all three Platform 2 events.

Table 5.1: Expert attendance at Platform 2 events

	Troubled Families	Disaffected Youth	Marginalised in Communities
Troubled Families	8	2	2
Disaffected Youth	2	14	5
Marginalised in Communities	2	5	15

5.3 The three Platform 2 events each considered a number of sub-themes and there was a good spread of experts with a main or secondary expertise across each of these in all three events as shown in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Experts areas of main and secondary expertise at the Platform 2 events.

Sub-Theme	Main Expertise	Secondary Expertise
Brussels (8 expert respondents)		
Offender Families	5	0
Multigenerational / Long-Term Unemployment	3	4
Anti-social behaviour	5	2
Educational problems	3	3
Rome (14 expert respondents)		
Offender Families	4	4
Multigenerational / Long-Term Unemployment	6	4
Anti-social behaviour	7	3
Educational problems	11	0
Bremen (15 expert respondents)		
Homelessness; Physical, mental and learning difficulties	6	6
Offenders/Ex Offenders; and Drugs and Alcohol abuse	11	4

5.4 One difference amongst the expert respondents at the three events was the extent to which they had been involved in Platform 1. While around a half of the expert respondents (11 of 20) at the Brussels and Rome events had been to a Platform 1 event, only 2 of the 15 expert respondents from the Bremen event had attended a Platform 1 event.

Presenter Profile

5.5 We asked experts at the three Platform 2 events which of the other Platform 2 events they would be attending. There was limited overlap

between the three sets of presenters / practitioners at the three events as shown in Table 5.3. Only one presenter attended all three Platform 2 events.

Table 5.3: Presenter attendance at Platform 2 events

	Troubled Families	Disaffected Youth	Marginalised in Communities
Troubled Families	9	2	1
Disaffected Youth	2	9	2
Marginalised in Communities	1	2	13

5.6 Table 5.4 shows the spread of presenters with a main or secondary expertise across each of the sub-themes. In general, there appears to be a good coverage of expertise amongst presenters across the Platform 2 events. The only exception being expertise in offenders' families at the Rome event on Disaffected Youth where only one presenter had this as a main expertise.

Table 5.4: Presenters areas of main and secondary expertise at the Platform 2 events.

Sub-Theme	Main Expertise	Secondary Expertise
Brussels (9 presenter respondents)		
Offender Families	4	2
Multigenerational / Long-Term Unemployment	6	2
Anti-social behaviour	4	3
Educational problems	6	1
Rome (9 presenter respondents)		
Offender Families	1	3
Multigenerational / Long-Term Unemployment	8	0
Anti-social behaviour	5	2
Educational problems	5	2
Bremen (13 presenter respondents)		
Homelessness; Physical, mental and learning difficulties	9	0
Offenders/Ex Offenders; and Drugs and Alcohol abuse	4	2

Effectively organised events

5.7   We asked participants to rate the information / reading they received prior to and at the Platform 2 final events. Survey respondents were able to rate these as: very good, good, neither good or poor, poor, very poor and not applicable. Overall, this information / reading was highly regarded across all three Platform 2 events, with at least 90% of expert or presenter survey respondents rating these as either good or very good. We also calculated an overall scoring based on very good as 5, through to 1 for very poor. Both pre-event and at event reading / information were

rated at 4.5 or more by the experts and presenters, as shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Rating of pre-event and at event reading / information at Platform 2 Events

	Overall rating	Percentage rating as good or very good
Pre-event		
Experts	4.57	97%
Presenters	4.58	96%
At Event		
Experts	4.50	91%
Presenters	4.58	90%

5.8   For Platform 2 events the pre-event reading / information appears to have been slightly more highly regarded than that provided at the events themselves.

5.9   Nearly all respondents, (33 out of 37 responses) amongst both experts and presenters believed that that they had been placed in the right discussion group at the Platform 2 events. The four respondents who indicated that they should have been in another group stated that they had greater expertise in that topic area than the group they were placed in. When the groups people were placed in are compared with their stated areas of interest / expertise then we find that 35 out of 37 respondents were placed in a group in which they stated they had a main expertise.

"I was in the homelessness group. I thought that because of my experience I would have been more suited to be in the offenders group but I think the rationale was that by being put in a mixed panel you get a broader range" (Interview)

5.10   We also asked participants to rated the running of the event overall. Survey respondents were able to rate this as: very good, good, neither good or poor, poor, very poor and not applicable. Over 90% of respondents rated the three Platform 2 events as either good or very good. We also calculated an overall score for each of the three events with very good as 5, through to 1 for very poor. The results are shown in

Table 5.6. All three events were highly regarded by our survey respondents with the Rome event being especially highly rated.

"They were well organised. The venues were very well chosen and we had enough rooms and enough equipment." (Interview)

"I know how difficult it is to bring the things together. I particularly would like to say absolutely superb work was done by [NOMS staff]. As you know in these circumstances you have to do several things at the same time and if you have a great audience you have endless people – they are querying etc etc, it was very good." (Interview)

Table 5.6: Rating of the running of the Platform 2 events

	Overall rating	Percentage rating as good or very good
Brussels	4.59	100%
Rome	4.77	100%
Bremen	4.59	93%

Usefulness of events

5.11   Our evaluation form asked people to rate various parts of the Platform 2 events. The format of these events varied. All three Platform 2 events included a presentation covering a systematic review of the research to date relevant to the particular theme of that event, presentations covering particular interventions 'qualifying' from the Platform 1 events and a discussion session.   In addition, the Brussels event included a presentation from the European Commission while the Rome event included some expert introductions. Survey respondents were able to rate the parts of the event programme as: very useful, quite useful, not very useful, or not at all useful. In most cases these were sessions were rated either very useful or quite useful by all survey respondents. The exceptions are shown in Table 5.7 where the overall scores are italicised to show those sessions at those events where less than 100% of respondents rated them as very or quite useful. We calculated the overall scores shown in Table 5.7 as follows: a rating of very useful was scored 4 down to 1 for not at all useful. Hence the maximum score that can be attained is 4. In general, the various parts of the programme at the

Platform 2 events were very well regarded with score of 3.50. The only exceptions being the European Commission presentation at the Brussels event and the Discussion Session at the Rome event. All sessions achieved an overall score of at least three indicating that overall all sessions were at least deemed quite useful.

"*I was able to recognise everything we've achieved in such a short period of time and get some confirmation from the others that we were doing the right thing. It was really good to get that feedback and the Q&A from the experts.*" (Interview)

Table 5.7 Usefulness of various parts of the Platform 2 events' programmes

	Brussels	**Rome**	**Bremen**
Presentation on systematic review and research	3.50	3.76	3.71
Presentations on interventions	3.76	*3.72*	3.75
Discussion session	3.57	*3.45*	3.80
Feedback on interventions	3.78	3.75	*3.61*
European Commission Presentation	*3.06*	-	-
Expert introductions	-	*3.69*	-

5.12   Our evaluation form also asked about: the representation of network members, opportunities to interact with others and the opportunities to raise questions at the Platform 2 events. Survey respondents were able to rate these as: very good, good, neither good or poor, poor, very poor and not applicable. Tables 5.8 to 5.10 show the results of scoring very good as 5, through to 1 for very poor for these aspects of the event together with the percentage of respondents who rated this aspect of the event as very good or good (excluding any not applicable / blank responses). It is clear that these aspects of the events were highly regarded by survey respondents at all three Platform 2 events.

"The commonality and interest of the attendees made the event very interesting and informative."

"An excellent worthwhile event. Being given the opportunity to interact with other network members has been wonderful. The sharing of ideas has been very helpful, a great experience that I really enjoyed."

Table 5.8: Rating of the representation of network members

Event	Overall rating	Percentage rating as good or very good
Brussels	4.65	100%
Rome	4.55	95%
Bremen	4.42	88%

Table 5.9: Rating of the opportunities to interact with others

Event	Overall rating	Percentage rating as good or very good
Brussels	4.76	100%
Rome	4.78	100%
Bremen	4.70	96%

Table 5.10: Rating of the opportunities to raise questions

Event	Overall rating	Percentage rating as good or very good
Brussels	4.71	100%
Rome	4.65	100%
Bremen	4.78	100%

5.13   We also asked two open questions about the most and least useful features of the Platform 2 events. In total across the three events: 45 responses were given for the most useful feature compared to just 9 for the least useful feature, with some respondents giving more than one response in the most useful category.   In Brussels, the most useful features of the event most frequently identified were the project presentations and the ability to learn and exchange ideas about good practices for projects.   In Rome, this ability to learn and exchange ideas about good practice stood out as clearly the most cited most useful feature of the event with eight out of the total of 18 mentions. Also mentioned as the most useful feature (four times) were the discussions of the projects and their practices. In Bremen, the most commonly mentioned most useful part of the event was group discussion (five mentions) followed by networking (three mentions). No particular themes emerged from the parts of the events that were identified as least useful as they were generally single mentions of a particular feature.   The only exception being the second day discussions at the Brussels event which two commented on as being too general as to be useful.

5.14   Our evaluation form asked respondents to rate the overall meeting programmes at the three Platform 2 events as either very good, good, neither good or poor, poor, or very poor. Across the three events 63 out of 66 (95%) respondents to this question rated the overall event programme as good or very good and no respondents rated the event programme as either poor or very poor. Hence overall the Platform 2 events appear to be very well regarded by event participants. We created an overall score for each event with a rating of very good as 5, through to 1 for very poor. The results for the three events are shown in Table 5.11.

"I wasn't sure what to expect but it has been very interesting and I have learned a lot"

Table 5.11: Rating of the overall event programme

Event	Score
Brussels	4.24
Rome	4.59
Bremen	4.59

Project assessment

5.15 We asked about the projects presented at the Platform 2 meetings from two perspectives. First by asking practitioners about the process of putting their projects forward and then the expert reviewers about various aspects of these projects.

5.16 We received 31 responses from practitioners. The numbers of these agreeing with various positive statements about the process of submitting their project to the Active Inclusion Network are shown below. Nearly all respondents had a positive view of the application questionnaire that it was simple and asked the right questions. However, respondents were less clear about the criteria used to analyse projects and particularly the reasons their project was selected for showcasing at Platform 2 events.

Table 5.12: Practitioners' views about the Active Inclusion Network

Aspect of Platform 2 process for projects	Number strong / slightly agreeing
The application questionnaire was simple to complete.	29
Questionnaire asked the right questions about projects.	29
Criteria used to analyse projects were clearly explained.	25
Reasons for my project being selected for Platform 2 were clear	22
It was clear what the presentation on my project event should cover.	28

5.17 We received 36 responses from the experts about various aspects of projects presented at the Platform 2 events. The responses to this question show that an overwhelmingly majority of experts had a positive evaluation of the projects that were presented on the five dimensions set out in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13: Experts' views about projects presented at Platform 2 events.

Aspect of projects	Number rating as very or quite good on particular aspects

Good range of interventions presented	34
Representative of transnational good practice	31
Innovative	34
Transferable to other countries / contexts	34
Financially viable	31

Perception and Expectations

5.18   We asked respondents both about their perceptions of the main purpose of the Active Inclusion Network. This was an open question and so we have grouped the responses in Table 5.14. Although we asked about a main purpose many of those responding to this question indicated more than one item. Table 5.14 includes those responses that were mentioned at least three times by our expert or presenter survey respondents.

5.19   Learning about good policy and practice and exchanging information about these, networking, and to a lesser extent improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups emerge as consistent perceptions of the main purposes of the Active Inclusion Network. This fits well with concept of a learning network whereby networking between practitioners and other experts is intending to build the capacity of practitioners and policy makers and so lead to better outcomes for the policy areas that the network is focused on.

Table 5.14: Perceptions of the main purpose of the Active Inclusion Network (Number of mentions)

	Experts	Presenters
Brussels	Learning about good policy and practice elsewhere (5) Networking (5) Exchanging information on / facilitating transferability of best practice (3) Improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups (3)	Learning about good policy and practice elsewhere (6) Exchanging information on / facilitating transferability of best practice (4) Networking (3) Improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups (3)
Rome	Learning about good policy	Learning about good policy

	Experts	Presenters
	and practice elsewhere (9) Influencing Policy (4) Exchanging information on / facilitating transferability of best practice (3)	and practice elsewhere (7) Exchanging information on / facilitating transferability of best practice (3) Networking (3)
Bremen	Learning about good policy and practice elsewhere (16) Exchanging information on / facilitating transferability of best practice (7) Networking (6) Showcasing Projects (5) Improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups (3) Influencing Policy (3)	Learning about good policy and practice elsewhere (7) Exchanging information on / facilitating transferability of best practice (7) Networking (3)

5.20 Our evaluation forms asked experts what they believed the main purpose of the Platform 2 events was. (This question was not asked to presenters / practitioners.) A similar picture to the perceptions about the Active Inclusion Network overall emerges. Table 5.15 includes those responses that were mentioned at least three times by our expert survey respondents. There is a particular belief amongst the experts that the Platform 2 events are focused on learning, exchanging information and transferring best practice. All matters which a key parts of an effective learning network.

Table 5.15: Experts' perceptions of the main purpose of the Platform 2 events

Reason	Number of times cited
Exchanging information on / facilitating transferability of best practice	12
Learning about other projects	11

/policies	
Improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups	6
Influencing Policy	5
Networking	4
Showcasing their project	4

5.21 Presenters were asked by our evaluation form to set out their reasons for submitting their project to the Active Inclusion Network. Table 5.16 includes those responses that were mentioned at least three times by our survey respondents. A different focus emerges here compared to the perceptions of the purpose of the Active Inclusion Network / the Platform 2 events. Practitioners are much more focused on their own projects both in showcasing them and seeking to improve them via feedback from participants at the Platform 2 events. Practitioners appear far more focused on operational matters to do with project delivery and performance as a motivation for engagement with the Active Inclusion Network than wider concepts of learning, and disseminating good practice.

Table 5.16: Practitioners' reasons for submitting their project to the Active Inclusion Network

Reason	Number of times cited
Showcasing their project	20
Improving project via feedback	14
Learning about other projects /policies	11
Networking	9
Exchanging information on / facilitating transferability of best practice	5
Improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups	4

5.22 We also asked expert respondents why they believed they had been invited to the Platform 2 events. The most common reason given was that they had relevant specific expertise (21 mentions) followed by involvement in similar projects (7 mentions). In addition, four respondents mentioned that they believed that their invite had been because they knew other members of the network, perhaps suggesting some role for informal relationships.

5.23 We also asked survey respondents whether the Platform 2 events had met their expectations. We also about the reasons for these responses. There was a contrast between the opinion of expert respondents and that of presenters. Nearly all presenters / practitioners, 29 out of 31 respondents, said that their expectations had been met compared to 21 out of 36 experts. In addition, 14 experts said their expectations had mostly been met.

"I didn't expect a lot so what I got was very good and over my expectations."

5.24 Comparing these responses across the three Platform 2 events, Table 5.17 shows the percentage who responded yes to whether their expectations of the event had been met. In terms of reasons for their responses those who responded yes pointed to the quality of the discussions, the opportunities to learn, and disseminate new ideas and best practice. Some of those who said that their expectations had been mostly met gave positive reasons for their answer while of those expressing forms of partial dissatisfaction a variety of issues were raised and so no particular trends emerged.

Table 5.17: Percentage of respondents whose expectations for events had been met.

Event	Percent of Yes respondents
Brussels	82%
Rome	65%
Bremen	78%

Use of Learning and Impact

5.25 We asked survey respondents whether they would use anything learned at the Platform 2 event they attended to improve delivery or policy. Across the three events 65 out of 66 people who answered this question said that they would be able to use their learning in this way.

5.26 This question was followed up with a question about what one thing would respondents do differently as a result of the Final Event. We received 48 substantive responses to this question. The responses received were varied. However, 18 of these related to the application of learning to current or future projects. These were often quite detailed operational points, for example, using short intensive activities with young offenders. Other themes that emerged were new ideas for or exploring new sources of funding for projects (7 mentions) and to keep in contact with network members in the future and call on their expertise (also 7 mentions).

5.27 In addition, we asked practitioners about what had been the main benefit of submitting their project to the Active Inclusion Network. We received 29 responses to this question with respondents often mentioning more than one main reason. Two main areas of benefit stood out: showcasing their projects and getting expert feedback / challenge on their projects.

Table 5.18: Main benefit practitioners identified of submitting their project to the Active Inclusion Network

Benefit	Number of mentions
Expert feedback / challenge	14
Showcasing their project	13
Improved interventions / outcomes for disadvantaged groups	8
Learning about good practice / new ideas	7
Networking	7

Other Comments

5.28 Our final evaluation question asked respondents to add any further comments about the Platform 2 event they had attended. This produced twenty six responses, most of which were positive. Some respondents mentioned more than one issue and some responses were along the lines of: "thank you for a great event". However, some main themes emerged from an analysis of these comments:

- Events had been well run / organised, with a good structure and facilitation (7 mentions)

- Events had been interesting / useful (6 mentions)

- Been a good opportunity to transfer knowledge and acquire new ideas (5 mentions)

- Would have been good to have had more time for discussions (5 mentions) with one respondent suggesting that this could have been achieved by extending the event from 1½ to 2 full days.

6 Final Event

6.1 The Final Event was held in Rome in May 2015. Its aim was to bring together all the findings from the project and share these with invited participants who were either people who had been involved in the network at the Platform 1 and, or Platform 2 events, or stakeholders with an interest and relevant expertise. Ninety eight people attended the event and we received 42 evaluation forms back.

Participant Profile

6.2 There appears to have been a good split amongst attendees between those who had been involved in the Network before at either the Platform 1 or Platform 2 stage, with 21 (50%) of the 42 who returned evaluation forms having attended either a Platform 1 or Platform 2 event. Of these 12 (29% of all survey returns) had attended both a Platform 1 and a Platform 2 event. Sixteen respondents (38%) had not attended either a Platform 1 or Platform 2 event. Five respondents (12%) left this part of the questionnaire blank. This suggests that they were unaware of either the Platform 1 or Platform 2 events and so in all probability did not attend any of these events.

6.3 Our evaluation form asked about participants' area of expertise / interest. Participants were able to identify more than one main or secondary interest. The responses are shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Main and secondary interest / expertise of respondents

Interest / expertise	Main	Secondary
Troubled Families	8	15
Disaffected Youth	26	9
Marginalised in Communities	21	14

6.4 There was clearly a much greater degree of expertise amongst the survey respondents for the Disaffected Youth and Marginalised in Communities themes than for the Troubled Families theme.

Effectively organised events

6.5 We asked participants to rate the information / reading they received prior to and at the Rome final event. Survey respondents were able to rate these as: very good, good, neither good or poor, poor, very poor and not applicable. The information / reading sent out prior to the final event was less well regarded than that provided at the event. Thirty two people (76%) thought the pre-meeting information was either very good or good compared to 38 (90%) for the information provided at the event itself. In addition, five respondents rated the pre-meeting information as poor. Overall scoring very good as 5, through to 1 for very poor the overall score for the information sent out prior to the event was 4.07 compared to 4.36 for the information provided at the event.

6.6 There was near universal belief amongst the survey respondents that they had been placed in the right groups for both the 1st and 2nd Discussion Forums. For the 1st Discussion Forums, 41 out of 42 respondents felt that they had been placed in the correct group with one respondent not answering this question. This one respondent was placed in the forum for the Marginalised in Communities theme, which was their main area of expertise.

6.7 In the main individuals were placed in groups that mirrored one of their main areas of interest / expertise. Eight respondents were placed in groups where they had only secondary expertise or no stated expertise. In all cases they felt that they had been placed in the right discussion forum, perhaps indicating that they were using these forums to broaden out their knowledge and expertise.

6.8 For the 2nd Discussion Forums, 39 out of 42 respondents felt that they had been placed in the correct group with three non-responses to this question. Of these three, only one indicated which discussion forum they had been placed in. This suggests that the other two did not attend these discussion forums.

6.9 The forum on employment and social enterprise was the most popular with the survey respondents as it was attended by 24 out of the 39 participants who identified which forum they went to. This is supported by our observations of these sessions in Rome, as this was clearly the forum that attracted the most participants.

6.10 In general, there was a reasonable spread of people with expertise in the three themes (Troubled Families, Disaffected Youth, and Marginalised in

Communities) across the three forums with no one area of expertise concentrated into any of the forums. This is shown by Table 6.2 below:

Table 6.2: Main / Secondary Interest by 2nd Discussion Forum

| Discussion Group	Main Interest / Expertise	Secondary Interest / Expertise
Employment and Social Enterprise		
Troubled Families	4	7
Disaffected Youth	15	5
Marginalised in Communities	11	9
Funding and Partnerships		
Troubled Families	1	3
Disaffected Youth	4	2
Marginalised in Communities	3	4
Holistic (Wrap Around) Approach Forum		
Troubled Families	2	5
Disaffected Youth	6	1
Marginalised in Communities	4	1

6.11 We also asked participants to rated the running of the event overall. Survey respondents were able to rate these as: very good, good, neither good or poor, poor, very poor and not applicable. Forty one people responded to this question, of these 39 (95%) rated the running of the event as either very good or good. With one respondent each saying that the running of the event had been neither good or poor and poor. Overall scoring very good as 5, through to 1 for very poor the overall score for the running of the event was 4.44.

Usefulness of events

6.12 Our evaluation form asked people to rate both various parts of the Final Event programme and various aspects of the Final Event itself. Survey

respondents were able to rate the parts of the event programme as: very useful, quite useful, not very useful, or not at all useful. Figure 6.1 shows the numbers of survey respondents rating the ten parts of the event programme in these categories plus the number giving a blank response. For those parts of the event programme occurring on Day 1, the number of completed responses was around 40. However, the number of blank responses rose in Day 2 from nine for the panel discussion up to 19 for the final conference review. In part this was due to people filling in and returning the evaluation form before the end of the event. However, this difference in responses to the questions makes it difficult to compare the ratings across parts of the programme that occurred on the two days.

Figure 6.1: Rating of the ten parts of the Final Event programme (numbers)
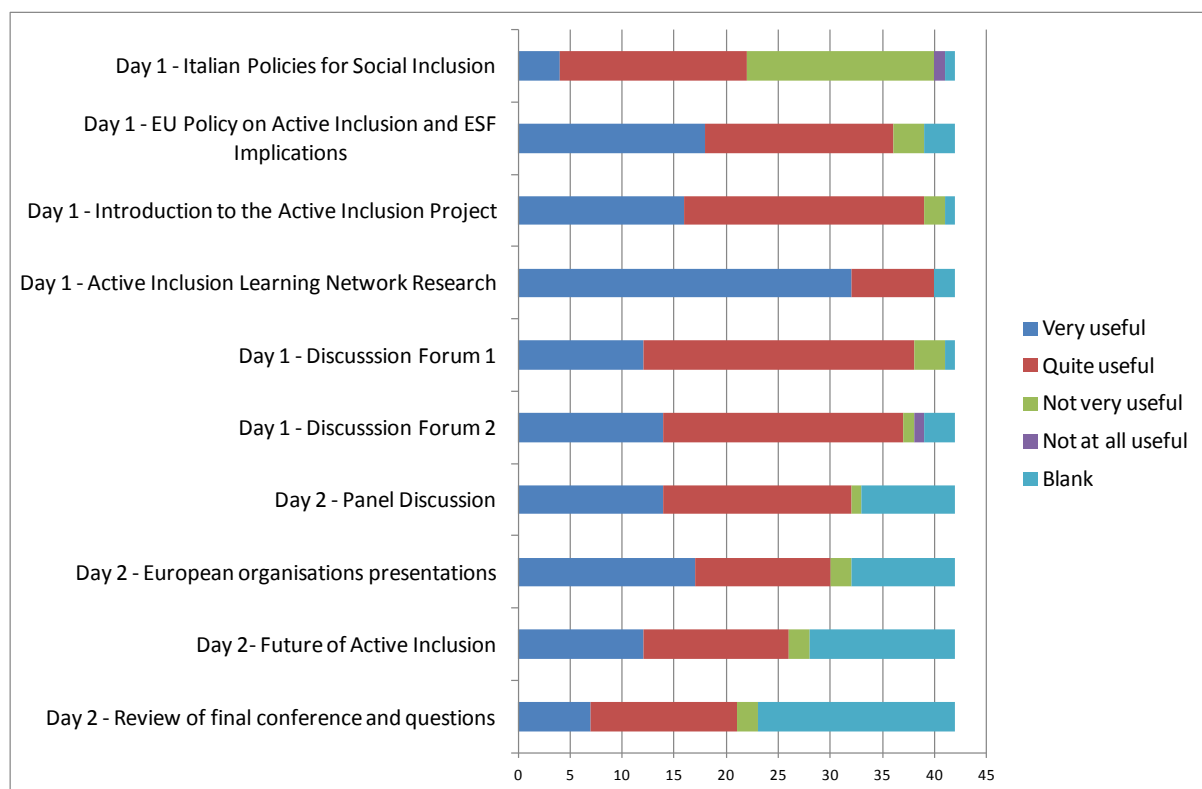
6.13   In order to adjust for this differential response Figure 6.2 shows the percentage of people rating the ten parts of the event programme as very useful, quite useful, not very useful, or not at all useful, excluding any blank responses. In general, the sessions at the final event were highly regarded with over 90% of respondents rating them as very or quite useful. The session on the active inclusion network research report given by Professor Ioan Durnescu (University of Bucharest) stands out as being particularly highly rated by the survey respondents – 80% rated it as very useful and the remaining 20% rated it as quite useful. The next most

highly rated session was the European organisations presentations session where 53% of respondents rated it as very useful. The session on Italian policies for social inclusion was least highly rated with only 10% of respondents rating this as very useful, and 46% rating this as either not very or not at all useful.

Figure 6.2: Rating of the ten parts of the Final Event programme (percentages excluding blank responses)
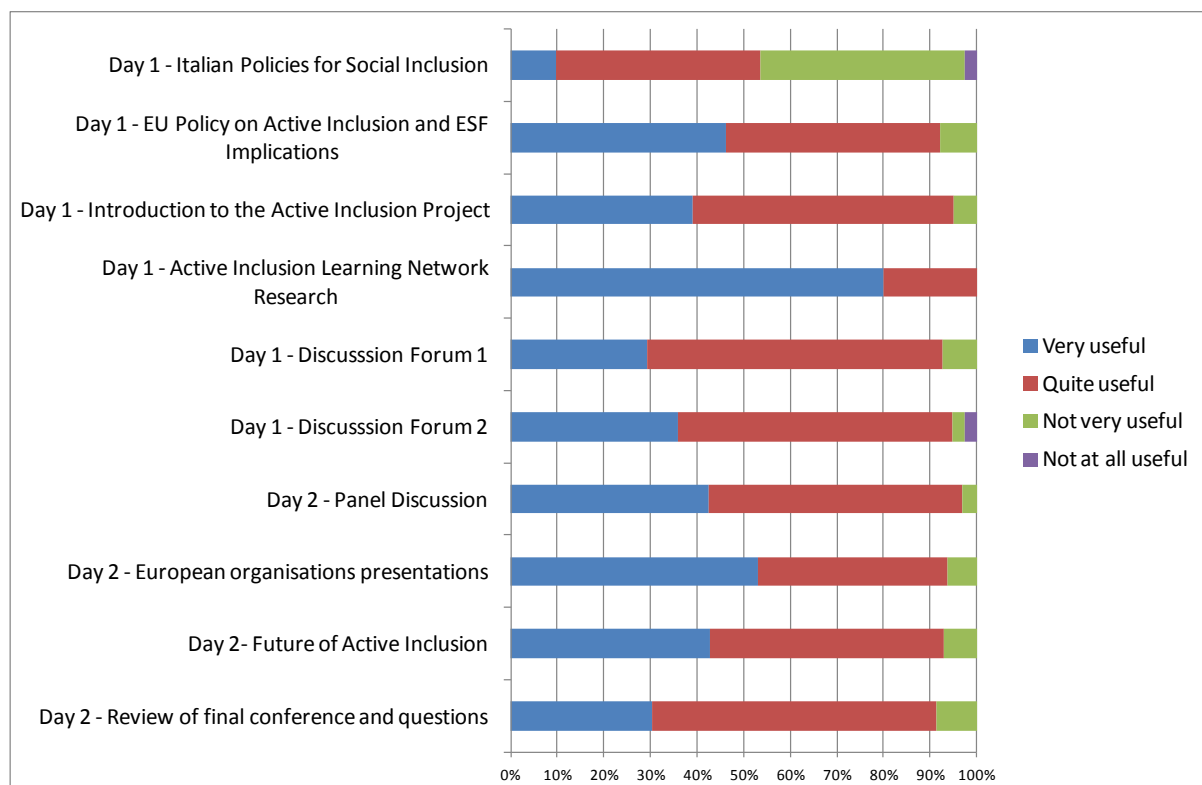
6.14 Our evaluation form asked about: the representation of network members, opportunities to interact with others and the opportunities to raise questions at the Final Event. Survey respondents were able to rate these as: very good, good, neither good or poor, poor, very poor and not applicable. Table 6.3 shows the results of scoring very good as 5, through to 1 for very poor for these aspects of the event together with the percentage of respondents who rated this aspect of the event as very good or good (excluding any not applicable / blank responses).

Table 6.3: Ratings of various aspects of the Final Event

Aspect	Overall rating	Percentage rating as good or very good
Representation of Network Members	4.31	86%
Opportunities for interaction	4.60	90%
Opportunities to question	4.55	95%

6.15 We also asked two open questions about the most and least useful feature of the Final Event. The responses were quite wide ranging across both the various parts of the final event programme and the various aspects of the event. Overall 27 responses were given for the most useful feature and 17 for the least useful feature, with some respondents giving more than one response in at least one of these categories.

6.16 On the most useful side three features stood out as being mentioned much more frequently: meeting new people / making new contacts / networking (nine mentions), learning / getting new ideas or information (eight mentions) and the Active Inclusion Network research presentation (given by Professor Ioan Durnescu) (seven mentions). For least useful, the presentation on Italian policies was mentioned seven times and the only other response attracting more than one mention was Nothing with three mentions.

6.17 Our evaluation form also asked respondents to rate the overall meeting programme as either very good, good, neither good or poor, poor, or very poor. Forty one out of forty two respondents answered this question and of these 38 (93%) rated the overall event programme as good or very good and no respondents rated the event programme as either poor or very poor. Hence overall the event appears to be highly regarded by event participants.

Perceptions and Expectations

6.18 We asked respondents both about their perceptions of the main purposes of both the Final Event and the Active Inclusion Network. These were

open questions and so we have grouped the responses as below in Tables 6.4 and 6.5. Although we asked about a main purpose a number of those responding to this question (36 out of the total 42 respondents) indicated more than one item. Table 6.4 sets out the perceived purposes of the Active Inclusion Network.

Table 6.4: Perceived main purpose of the Active Inclusion Network

Purpose	Number of responses
Identifying good practice to improve interventions, policies and so outcomes.	26
Learning about practice and policy elsewhere	18
Networking	12
Showcasing projects	5
Learning from others	3
Obtaining information on funding	1

6.19 Learning and identifying practices which could be used improve outcomes for the disadvantaged groups were the two most commonly cited perceived purposes for the Active Inclusion Network. This fits well with notion of a learning network whereby practitioners and other experts are brought together in order to build the capacity of practitioners and policy makers. Only a small minority of respondents mentioned showcasing of projects as the main purpose of the network. This activity was presumably seen as more of a means to an end than an end in itself. Nonetheless, a participant we interviewed stated:

"I think the inclusion of [our project] in the final report will also give us some exposure"

6.20 Table 6.5 sets out the perceived purposes of the Rome Final Event. Compared to the perceived purpose of the Active Inclusion Network the perceived main purposes of the Final Event are rather more wide ranging. Again the most common responses are around forms of learning, information dissemination, practice and policy improvements, and networking and contact building that fit with the purposes of a learning network.

Table 6.5: Perceived main purpose of the Rome Final Event

Purpose	Number of responses
Networking /Building Contacts	11
Disseminating findings / concluding the two years of the project	9
Celebrating the work of the project / presenting the outcomes from it	7
To influence the future direction of practice and policy	9
Learning about policies / Information sharing	10
Link practice to (better) policy	6
Improving outcomes	2
To evaluate the impact of the network	1
Marketing the network	1
Showcasing projects	1

6.21   Our evaluation form also asked respondents about why they believed they had been invited to the Final Event. The most common reason given was that they had some particular expertise concerning practices or policies for the groups (Disaffected Youth, Troubled Families, and Marginalised in Communities covered by the Active Inclusion Network), (20 mentions) followed by involvement in similar projects / practitioner experience (8 mentions). Again these reasons seem relevant to the purposes of a learning network.

6.22   We also asked survey respondents whether the Final Event had met their expectations. Twenty eight out of 42 respondents (67%) said Yes, 12 Mostly (29%), and 2 (5%) No. We also about the reasons for these responses. Amongst those answering yes the most common reason given for doing so was around the perceived excellent opportunities for networking and information sharing.

"It was an excellent opportunity to meet organisations with similar interests and aims as ours, sharing ideas and networking." (practitioner survey respondent)

6.23   Amongst those whose expectations had mostly been met some gave positive responses about the event. Two stated that they had expected more focus on the overarching research report (from Professor Durnescu) in order to use its findings to improve future policy and practice. The one respondent who said that their expectations had not been met referred to poor discussions compared to what they had experienced in the Platform 1 and 2 events.

Use of Learning and Impact

6.24   We asked survey respondents whether they would use anything learned at the event to improve delivery or policy. Thirty eight people answered this question and of these 35 people said that they would be able to use their learning in this way.

"I think any shared practice we have gained will only enhance the delivery of our programme and build projects that are more inclusive." (Interview)

6.25   This question was followed up with a question about what one thing would respondents do differently as a result of the Final Event. We received 24 substantive responses to this question including (rather oddly) two from people who said they would not be able to use the learning they had gained at the event. The responses received were rather diverse with the most often mentioned being collaboration with other organisations (including internationally) to develop future projects. Table 6.6 shows the responses in full.

"[The events] were very useful in term of engaging with other people, sharing ideas, networking thereafter. I've had contact with a number of companies since about collaborations and possible co-funding but a lot of it takes time, a bit of a waiting game." (Interview)

"We got many rich materials. I think it is our responsibility now to disseminate these practices." (Interview)

Table 6.6: What survey respondents will do differently as a result of participating in the Final Event

Changes	Number of responses
Collaboration with other organisations to develop future projects	4
Implements the research findings in future projects / policies	3
More holistic projects	3
Focus more on key targets / outcomes	2
Maintain contact with the Active Inclusion Network members	2
Seek to change criminal records policy so that ex-offenders are not excluded from work	2
Actively look for how others are tackling issues that we are confronting	1
Engage with future learning networks	1
Consult more	1
Improve practice to policy links	1
Use information gained to improve funding bids	1
Disseminate the research findings	1
Keep abreast of evidence	1
Way I interact with disadvantaged individuals	1

Other Comments

6.26   Our final evaluation question asked respondents to add any further comments about the event. This produced eight responses. Three of these were positive comments, four negative comments and one neutral comment.   The positive comments related to the opportunities to network, acquire information on good practice and learn. The neutral comment was around the need to maintain the network that had been

built up by the project. The four negative comments were around the Disaffected Youth discussion forum which was viewed being confusing, Italian language presenters speaking too fast to allow for adequate translation, that discussion at the event should have been more coherent and that the event lacked some clarity as it was not clear if it was disseminating findings or providing an opportunity to influence those findings.

Despite this the overall feeling from participants was positive and a feeling that the work should be continued.

"I think it needs to be done again. It would be nice to revisit where everyone is in five years time." (Interview)

"We managed to identify good practices and we managed to have good discussions about the principles behind those good practices. Then we were able to identify the learning points, the innovation and all these points we wanted to identify. The point is that we didn't find enough as the research on this area is quite slim - we were not able to find enough hard evidence but apart from that we were able to identify a number of good practices and baseline that against the literature. We managed to come with some useful ideas." (Interview)

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 The analysis set out in this report clearly indicates that the Active Inclusion Network was a successful example of a learning network. In all three stages of the network events (Platform 1, Platform 2 and the Final Event) it is clear that participants (both practitioners and experts) highly regarded the opportunity to network, learn about projects and new ideas, and felt that they would be able to play their learning to improve interventions, policies and so outcomes for disadvantaged individuals.

7.2 The fact that the events were well planned and run presumably contributed to this as consistently the overall programmes organised for the events were very highly regarded.

"Participating on international level is always very beneficial for organisation in one sense or another. For example, in the final conference an example was selected for good practice and they made a presentation and now I hope they are known among all participants of that conference. So it was useful to participate at every event." (Interview)

"I think this was a great project with impressive results. All we have to do now is to see it used in policy and practice." (Interview)

7.3 The leads the first set of recommendations:

- That similar networks to the Active Inclusion Network should be organised in the future covering both active inclusion and other policy areas of concern within the European Union (on the grounds that if this approach is successful for active inclusion practice and policy then it should be effective in other policy areas.)

- That legacy activities should be enacted to sustain into the future the benefits that the network has engendered (for example, an on line forum for Alumni of the network).

7.4 At the Platform 1 events., there was a concern that English as the sole language of the network (at that stage) biased matters against non-English speaking countries within the EU / countries where English language skills were less manifest than in other EU member states. The actual impact of this is not totally clear but we recommend that greater

thought be given to translation resources in future learning network projects. This has obvious cost implications and it may be very expensive and too complex to support translation into all EU member state languages. However, consideration should at least be given to translation of materials and at meetings into the six major EU languages (English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Polish.)

7.5 The questionnaires that practitioners were required to fill in were generally very highly as both being simple and asking the correct questions. They should thus be drawn on in the future for similar projects.

7.6 However, the criteria for the assessment of projects and the reasons why projects had been chosen was less clear to survey respondents. Hence, these matters need to be clearly set out in future similar projects. (It should be noted that despite this apparent limitation the Active Inclusion Network was successful in selecting good quality projects as the expert ratings of the projects presented at the Platform 2 events was very positive.)

7.7 At the final event, the presentation on the overarching research project undertaken by Professor Durnescu was by far the most highly regarded session. It complemented the specific focus on particular interventions and themes of other parts of the network's activities. This suggests that future learning network activities should include similar research with a wider focus as well as networking activities focused on learning from and disseminating the lessons of particular good practice projects.