

THEMATIC SEMINAR "SOCIAL PROTECTION ACROSS THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS" (SPaN)

SUMMARY

Social protection is a policy instrument with robust, flexible and widely available delivery mechanisms. In this respect social protection is generating further political interest as it allows for the rapid channeling of support to people most in need of assistance, and mitigates the effects of humanitarian disasters by strengthening targeted beneficiaries coping mechanisms; social protection also holds significant potential to transform short-term humanitarian interventions into development processes to achieve resilience, peace, stabilisation and economic growth in countries in crises.

This context was subject of the 22-24 January staff seminar on "Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (SPaN)". It took place in Paris in the premises of the French Ministry for Solidarity and Health, which hosted the event. In total 52 participants from DG DEVCO, ECHO and NEAR (together 14), ECHO Field (7), EU DEL (19), EU/EFTA (8), Implementing Partners (4), speakers and facilitators met to discuss parts of the content of the new European Commission's interservice Guidance Package (GP) on social protection and what the instrument can deliver as an effective short- and long-term response to multivariate shocks, protracted crises and displacement.

The GP has crafted a set of information that provides concrete and practical guidance to bridge humanitarian and development approaches based on the current body of knowledge, including brief definitions, processes of social protection approaches in most challenging settings. It illustrates the related challenges based on selected country practices, such as Somalia, Mali, Malawi, Colombia, Yemen, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan etc. Overall, the GP presents its content in various communication and training formats: a Reference Document lays the conceptual foundation; it is further complemented by specific operational notes, webinars, and peer-to-peer exchanges, e-learning and face-to-face seminars, such as the staff seminar in Paris.

Through presentations, panel discussions and group work, the seminar provoked a rich discussion among HQ and field staff and practitioners from the European Commission and EU MSs, provided specific information on methods and tools for policy development to support the operationalisation of SPaN and to foster shock-sensitive social protection in crises settings. Beyond inspiring technical content, the participants were also provided with latest updates on current EU policies, relevant for SP programming as well as first experiences with and future possibilities for joint implementation.

Indicative of the engaging dynamics of the Staff Seminar is the film clip recorded.

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DETAILS

Day 1 of the seminar followed the EU/EFTA Coordination Meeting on Social Protection and provided updates on working with social protection in crises contexts. In his opening speech, Filippos Pierros (Minister-Counsellor, Head of Section, EU DEL to OECD and UNESCO) emphasised the substantive increase in coordination across development and humanitarian actions at country and global level, including in the area of social protection, to operationalise the nexus in crises contexts. He further acknowledged the important contribution of SPaN and the seminar to the identification and development of innovative forward-looking solutions to address the human and national challenges generated by shocks and crises.

Jean-Louis de Brouwer (Director DG ECHO) and Stefano Signore (Head of Unit DG DEVCO) provided key updates on the EU institutional frameworks of the humanitarian response mechanisms and the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2021-2027), including the proposed structure of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). The discussion evolved around questions on the different pillars of the MFF, e.g. concerning different regional foci, on the thematic pillar and the exact scope of the global challenges, e.g. with respect to migration and human development. Further questions were raised on the M&E mechanisms under the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), priority-setting provisions under the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+), and whether enhanced collaboration with private partners is considered a priority for all thematic sectors. Defining scope and limits of the nexus approach, flexibility of various institutions' approaches and trends cooperation between DG DEVCO and DG ECHO were further discussed.

In the next session, Juergen Hohmann (DG DEVCO), Nadia Giske (DG NEAR) and Carina Staibano (DG ECHO) presented the Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (SPaN) Guidance Package. They provided an overview of a working typology of approaches to date, operational experiences, challenges and presentation of the response options matrix to achieve SPaN. Participants raised questions around gender mainstreaming and Guidance Package buy-in. The Guidance Package is ready for testing, the Reference Document has been handed over to the Publications Office of the EU for proceeding with its publication.

The sessions of **Day 2 on "Operationalising SPaN"** provided rich and inspiring technical inputs on selected forthcoming **practical content notes** presented by the authors. The lecturers were followed by intensive group work discussion focusing on:

 Context analysis and targeting: How to best align needs-and rights-based approaches for target and benefit level in view of immediate and long-term requirements? How to target displaced people and refugees and at the same time support the national systems?

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- <u>Benefit modalities</u>: Talking about CASH+: What kind of services/benefits do you consider essential to provide in addition to cash? Is there a trade-off between cash and other complementary services? A cornerstone of SRSP is effective collaboration/coordination within the nexus how to make sure this is done within SP-nexus discussions (different fora)?
- <u>Health and education</u>: How to reach out to of school children/IDPs/refugees, and include these groups in social protection/development initiatives? What is the complementary role of social protection to support access to and service quality of health and education (or across i.e. school meals), given the fact that these basic services are non-commodities?
- <u>Food and nutrition</u>: What policies are needed to make the still quite siloed sectors of food/nutrition and social protection more aligned and coordinated? Is there an understanding and agreement about what is "nutrition-sensitive" social protection?
- <u>Financing Social Protection:</u> How to maximise impact with the existing volume of financial resources?

In the late afternoon, the participants elaborated further on achieving "SPaN at country level" through short presentations on country experiences in Ethiopia, Lebanon and Sudan, DRR Asia, Afghanistan, Senegal and Iraq. In small groups, the participants engaged in discussing on how the nexus can be achieved at different levels and discussed amongst others.

Day 3 focused on supporting and jointly implementing shock-sensitive social protection systems. By means of a panel discussion, different available aid modalities for supporting the social protection nexus were presented and discussed. Patrice Lenormand (DG ECHO) provided insights on ECHO's mission, set-up of Humanitarian-Intervention Plans and scope of work. Nadim Karkutli (EUTF Syria Manager, DG NEAR) drawing on the EUTF Syria to illustrate his presentation, outlined how the four EU Trust Funds work, are funded and the added-value EUTFs generate. He further underscored the importance of the 'Joint Humanitarian Development Framework' between EUTF Syria and ECHO for nexus coordination and collaboration. Fabrice Ferrandes (DG DEVCO) focused on budget support as a means to ensure improvements of Public Financial Management with thematic priorities of specific sectors and gave examples from Iraq, Senegal and the Sahel Trust Fund in Mali. Main topics of the following discussion were the functioning of Trust Funds, budget support in fragile and conflict affected states, third party monitoring of Social Protection Systems, joint planning between DG NEAR and DG ECHO, and planning for shock-sensitive social protection programmes.

Christos Marazopoulos (DG DEVCO) highlighted the potential for Joint Programming and Joint Implementation by the European Commission and EU MSs, for which in the field of social protection already many exist in different partner countries. Andrei Tretyak (Expertise France) complemented the session on joint programming with a country example from Georgia.

The closing remarks focused on the variety of social protection instruments to be deployed in fragile and conflict affected states, the specificity of each country context, and the need to jointly work

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towards operationalising the nexus. They emphasised social protection as a type of long-term development cooperation which is key to bridge the nexus, e.g. through cash interventions and the importance of working with existing Government systems and an appeal to build national capacities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A key conclusion of the seminar was that participants warmly welcomed the social protection knowledge shared and learnt at the event. It was agreed that as the Commission is with scarce Social Protection expertise, the SPaN was a much-needed resource, particularly as it addresses how to work across the humanitarian-development nexus, and that it is uniquely tailored for fragile and conflict affected contexts. MSs also expressed deep appreciation to the Commission for its contribution of SPaN.

Secondly, the Seminar provided a unique and valuable opportunity for the European Commission and the EU MSs and their participating country and HQ staff from different geographical, institutional and thematic contexts and responsibilities, to engage with each other, discuss nexus wide approaches to tackle common challenges, network, and generate further interest and motivation to jointly plan and implement new actions. It further contributes to influence relevant decision-making bodies to formally agree upon common strategies or to resolve certain context specific challenges. As Filippos Pierros noted: "The format of this seminar contributes to the innovation that the European Commission wants and needs."

FOLLOW-UP

In order to finalize the much-applauded sectoral, thematic and contextual notes and to make them ready for ready for dissemination and application, a new peer review process has been launched at the seminar and will be facilitated by the SPaN team in the upcoming weeks. Participants have been invited to the Communities of Practice on capacity4dev and the G20 platform socialprotection.org, where all parts of the GP will be disseminated.

Next products under the GP are further remote interviews, certain webinars and an e-learning journey. By means of this seminar the SPaN initiative has put the rich content of the Guidance Package at the disposal of the stakeholders in order to use and test for its intended purpose. The European Commission will not continue the initiative with the same intensity as during the past two years. In the future, further collective efforts by Commission services, project implementing partners and EU MSs are needed to keep it up-to date and self-learning.

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