

**DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2021 ADVISORY GROUP MEETING OF THE EFFECTIVE  
INSTITUTIONS PLATFORM (EIP)**

<https://www.effectiveinstitutions.org>

**15 June 2021, 13:00-15:00 CET (Paris time)**

**Zoom Meeting**

**1. Introduction and Opening**

The CABRI Co-Chair introduced participants and the agenda (see attachment).

All AG members participated with the exception of Login Asia, the Ministry of Finance of Bangladesh and the Astana Civil Service Hub. A list of AG members is available in the Annex. From the EIP Secretariat, Catherine Anderson, Team Lead, Karin McDonald, Policy Analyst, Fredrik Bruhn, Junior Policy Analyst and Emile Boral Rolland, Junior Policy Analyst participated.

The objectives of the meeting were to review current progress as against the EIP Work Plan and discuss future work in the 2021-2022 biennium.

**Item I: Review current progress on the EIP Work Plan**

**Objective:** Provide an update on recent activities as against the Work Plan, discuss the outcome of these activities, what worked well and what could be further improved.

The EIP Secretariat provided a briefing note on activities undertaken in the first half of 2021 (see attached PPT for further information) based on the four objectives present in the Work Plan.

- **Objective 1:** Creating a platform to facilitate learning from P2P and alternative and innovative approaches to public sector reform and institutional development
- **Objective 2:** Building solid empirical evidence on the outcomes of P2P and alternative approaches to institutional development, and sharing that empirical evidence with relevant agencies and institutions
- **Objective 3:** Documenting and extracting learning for the creation of new P2P learning alliances
- **Objective 4:** Consolidating structures and functioning of the EIP

Among key activities undertaken, the EIP Secretariat delivered (i) a stocktaking report on **Lessons harvesting: Learning from P2P Engagements**, which was developed by an MEL consultant. This report takes stock of EIP member experiences of MEL approaches to P2P learning, maps how MEL is used in different P2P engagements and contains key lessons and insights.

The work informed the development and delivery of an EIP learning series on P2P methods and approaches focusing on three topics:

- Trust and Mutuality in P2P partnerships (December 2020)
- Learning through Interconnected systems (February 2021)
- Localised Learning and Unleashing Local Capabilities (May 2021)

Summary reports and draft learning notes were produced for each event, and made available via the EIP website. Insights from the events will contribute to the creation of a series of MEL tools to support P2P approaches for institutional development for pilot-testing. The Secretariat is working with the MEL consultant to prepare the next phase of the assignment, including through the identification and development of a series of MEL tools as prototypes for testing.

(ii) Work on the website revamp continues, with the process being almost finalised.

The Secretariat has enhanced its outreach and engagement activities, by engaging and collaborating with leading entities and organisations involved in P2P partnerships such as the Open Government Partnership, the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Norad, the Decentralisation and Local Governance network (DeLog) and Kenya's Council of Governors.

The Secretariat highlighted that it is now functioning with enhanced capability, and that improving its offer is key moving forward. Partnerships and engagement is an area to deepen the EIP Secretariat's focus particularly with developing countries and by securing EU and Norwegian participation. The aggregation of MEL tools and learning will bring a value add to the web-based platform, providing an online resource or platform for enhanced outreach and engagement.

*In plenary discussions, participants commended the work of the EIP in the last six months and shared the following thoughts on potential areas for improvements:*

The WBG, queried how best to enhance outreach and strengthen EIP dissemination channels to ensure greater awareness around the EIP's work. As peer learning remains a niche topic, part of the solution could involve bringing more institutions from the developing world and calibrating the focus of the EIP Secretariat to put more emphasis on outreach to increase platform participation.

IrishAid observed that the EIP has moved solidly forward over the last couple of years and that the comparative advantage of the EIP is the whole of government approach. The EIP's learning events were shared through the IrishAid system, nonetheless, there is a need to maximise reach and dissemination of EIP knowledge, tools and resources, especially with developing country partners' engagement. The question of whether the EIP is sufficiently clear or incisive in its message to ensure uptake of its resources or whether it might be easier to transmit these messages through specialised networks (e.g. OECD Capacity Building Network or OECD tax for Development) was also raised. Finally, it was suggested that one of the upcoming opportunities for dissemination of the EIP's messages is to get involved in the civic space and democratic support agenda to demonstrate the importance of effective institutions from an instrumental rather than normative agenda. This would provide an opportunity to demonstrate how P2P can help in the functioning of democratic States and their core institutions.

The Sida Co-Chair remarked that EIP outreach and engagement could be improved and that more reflection is needed around the processes the EIP wishes to influence and change. More precision is needed on what the EIP would like to achieve and what behavioural change would look like.

GPI added that it wishes to use the evidence of outcomes from the Lessons Harvesting report to show how useful P2P mechanisms and other alternative approaches are as a basis to secure continued

funding. This is particularly important given that funding for this agenda is receding. Moving forward, it was argued that gathering and capturing evidence of outcomes that is accessible and succinct is key.

The CABRI Co-Chair summarised the conversation and added that the learning events allowed EIP members and non-members alike to move beyond a general understanding of P2P to dive deeper into relevant issues. Moving forward, thinking about the Lessons Harvesting Report and how it can be applied through case studies to gather concrete evidence of P2P learning is crucial.

### **Item 2: Future work in the 2021-2022 biennium**

**Objective:** Identify and explore potential EIP priorities, existing activities to enhance and replicate, new activities to be adopted, and agree on next steps and timelines.

Framing the discussion on future work, the EIP Secretariat outlined the considerations and questions set out in the session note aiming to inform the potential revision of the EIP Work Plan. The need to better engage developing country institutions and to think more deeply about dissemination channels was reiterated.

The plenary discussion then focused on ways to leverage dissemination channels and how to improve outreach with partners while at the same time avoiding the risk that the EIP be perceived as an add-on to other networks.

The WBG suggested connecting the EIP with the Global Development Learning Network (a network of academic and learning institutions actively engaged in P2P learning of which Steffen Soulejman Janus is a board member), and at the same time signalled the challenges associated with using P2P learning as an entry point for a knowledge and learning agenda, as operational work is often built around sector-specific problems. It was further suggested that the EIP work with sectoral partners and see how specific networks could benefit from the lessons generated by the EIP. Taking a more general approach might make it difficult to find inroads with less appetite from traditional donor partners to fund P2P at this moment in time. This is also an experience taken from the World Bank's work on the South-South facility and the general learning that it is easier to find funding for a specific cause linked to a sector programme rather than for cross-cutting themes.

IrishAid agreed with the points made by the WBG adding that P2P is not a standalone approach as it is often complementary to or part of a range of activities that can reinforce knowledge and collaboration. It was argued that the EIP should identify where the opportunities are and look at two or three sectors to build its credibility and offer. This issue-based or cluster approach could start with a rapid mapping with many of the Advisory Group members having the networks to help in this endeavour. Establishing clear criteria for choosing sectors is key but there are several themes which could be potentially interesting including:

- (i) **Tax and Domestic Resource mobilisation** with a global transition happening at the moment and the existence of platforms and evidence focusing on this issue
- (ii) **Health**, which is a sector in which large amounts of funding are going due to the Covid crisis, to target Gavi and other health funds to build capabilities beyond service delivery

One of the comparative advantages of the EIP is its focus on bringing OECD members and southern partners together. Finally, the focus should not be only on knowledge creation but also on the importance of innovation.

The EIP Secretariat agreed on the challenges of a generic mainstreaming approach in terms of adding value and on the usefulness of employing a sector approach. Moreover, although some of the ingredients of P2P learning such as building trust and mutuality, learning through interconnected systems and localisation nevertheless resonate with a diverse range of technical projects, institutional partnerships look different in each sector, with PFM for example being highly technocratic while post-Covid responses are more sociologically oriented. The EIP Secretariat has produced a mapping of existing alliances, knowledge hubs and other types of entities involved in P2P partnerships that can be shared with AG members, and indeed it might be useful for AG members to highlight the partnerships with the most potential for collaboration, once they receive the document. The EIP can also be dovetailed into existing policy conversations at the OECD and DAC for sectoral opportunities for partnership and collaboration with regard to taxation, democracy/autocracy and digitalisation for example. The usefulness of the evidence-based work, particularly the MEL tools that are being developed by the MEL consultant and the upcoming Practitioners Circle' work, was highlighted. Twinning collaborative partnerships and engagement with evidence-based work would constitute a winning combination.

The CABRI Co-Chair suggested that one of the potential risks of a sectoral approach is of losing networks who come to the EIP specifically to learn about P2P approaches (e.g. LOGIN Asia) as opposed to the ones coming for a sector approach. In the case of an ATAF-like organisation, for instance, there is a problem in that they might not perceive the EIP, as a peer-learning platform, as an attractive offer as they predominantly use a technical assistance approach.

The Sida Co-Chair argued, with regard to outreach, that we should make a deliberate effort to include partners in the periphery of the EIP (those with greater interest in the P2P learning agenda). Some hesitation was expressed regarding the proposal to focus on specific sectors as the EIP's initial agenda comes from a Busan 'effectiveness' perspective with a view to strengthening national systems so donors and partners can work together. Irrespective, the EIP should maintain a focus on SDG16, which is at the core of the governance agenda. On the issue of evidence, the Practitioners Circle is an interesting initiative to see what works and what doesn't among different P2P initiatives and that having a partnership with a research organisation to build further evidence and enhance the EIP's credibility is crucial.

The Center for Economic Governance argued that if peer learning was strengthened around PFM, we could take different sub-themes around PFM (e.g. tax, fiscal issues and decentralisation) to allow for broader engagement. It was further argued that one of the ways to generate evidence is to twin EIP network members to partner members with the objective of doing peer learning on PFM or with a focus on strengthening country systems. This would build on what the EIP is currently doing and at the same time build more evidence and traction at country-level, especially in the South.

The WBG added that there is a danger on focusing only on one sector to the detriment of others (being either too generalist or too focused thereby losing the interest of other participants). It was suggested that the EIP should find inroads in different sectors by plugging our methodology in the discourses that happen in these different networks and by seeking to make it relevant to different sectors and the people in need of these tools.

USAID argued that the EIP should ensure we are bringing a greater diversity of groups into peer networks and find ways to reach out to more grassroots organisations rather than the usual coalitions.

We could then focus on areas of common interest or on common challenges. The theory of change behind this work could then be tested focusing on the value add to participants and learners.

The CABRI Co-Chair argued that a lot of the learning events were about the tools and also featured specific thematic areas in which the organisations were working. We do not necessarily want to lose the focus on specific tools when thinking about how to incorporate work on thematic areas. The strength of the EIP is to tap into a set of global priority issues all the while thinking about methodological challenges and tools.

IrishAid noted the point of needing to be careful of going down one tract or another arguing for an ‘and’ approach which involves looking at specific topics *and* keeping a more open and generic approach. The advantage of looking at a narrow approach is to trial, test, review and reflect on what is working and why. Findings from different modalities can then be cross-compared using this methodology. These sectoral clusters can then focus on the set of drivers that support organisational behaviour change. Sector-based work needs to be demand-based for funding agencies, operational agencies and non-State actors which is why doing a “political opportunity mapping” is key to ensure the adoption and finding of lessons.

The EIP Secretariat agreed that a sector specific focus and SDG 16 focus are not mutually exclusive. Identifying common interests, challenges and responding to demand are key for effective sector-specific engagement. One solution would be to look at SDG16 type problems around institutional efficacy and accountability in thematic areas in which there is momentum and change happening, thereby influencing change processes. In terms of the landscape, there is a real preoccupation in the DAC with regard to the COVID19 response and recovery, financing for development reform as well as around green recovery and resilience. The initial step would be to do a mapping of thematic areas with regard to SDG16 and then discuss a spectrum of engagement to raise the profile of the EIP. This could lead the EIP to play the role of a broker between different institutions for example. The EIP Secretariat further added that the evidence-based work from Dan Honig and colleagues (the Practitioners Circles initiative) touches on a range of common interests (e.g. bureaucratic capability, political motivation). Furthering this work would require an investment, but could be a valid add-on to the empirical and methodological basis of the EIP’s approaches. Building on a previous point, the EIP Secretariat signalled that country level engagement would be deepened through the piloting of the MEL tools.

The EIP Secretariat’s proposal with regard to next steps is twofold:

- (i) create a mapping of areas of potential engagement and
- (ii) revise the Work Plan ensuring that the partnership and engagement elements stands out as well as the MEL pilot testing element.

With regard to financing, Sida has contributed \$250,000 for key EIP Secretariat operations and Ireland around \$60,000 in this biennium (2021-2022). These resources can be used for core activities and one or two partnership engagements. More substantive sector engagement and the Practitioners Circles work will nevertheless require additional financing.

### **Item III: Any Other Business and Closing**

**Objective:** Summarise decisions taken, and AOB.

The departure of the EIP's current Co-Chair, Karin Metell Cueva, who will be taking up another assignment within Sida was announced. Pernilla Sjöquist Rafiqui, Senior Programme Manager at the Unit for Capacity Development at Sida, will act as interim Co-Chair until a successor is appointed.

The EIP Secretariat outlined the process for the identification and nomination of a new Co-Chair, which involves soliciting a call for expressions of interest among members, with a one month timeline for response. EIP members can nominate themselves or another member, for a two year term. DAC members were strongly encouraged to express their interest as a means to provide a balance between ODA providers and developing country participants.

Advisory Group members were also notified about the upcoming departure of Karin McDonald who has been the EIP program co-ordinator in the DCD Secretariat for the last two years.

### **Annexes**

Annex I – List of AG members

Annex II – Agenda

Annex III – Briefing Note on Activities in the first half of 2021

Annex IV – EIP Note on Future Activities