

Facilitation in Europe – a Dying Breed?

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This paper asks more questions than it answers, and has less to do with helping each of us in the SCP Network to be better facilitators in our specific contexts, and more about the future of facilitation in general, specifically broad facilitation teams working on a national scale with all interested denominations and groups.

During the years of the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting, people from various mission agencies were envisioned for facilitation on a broad scale, for discipling whole nations by getting a church within reach of every person in former communist Eurasia. A key goal was getting facilitation teams in each nation, formed from various agencies. A handful of mission agencies really jumped on board, and there were also individuals from other mission agencies who became part of the Budapest-based Regional Resource Team and national facilitation teams around the region. The Alliance was an umbrella of vision and some structure under which people could come to help start church planting movements.

That umbrella is gone and the loosely organized SCP Network has taken its place, with about a dozen parties involved in the first two SCP Network gatherings, and so far minimal to no interaction online through the online discussion group.

Many, if not most, mission agencies, talk about church planting and state CP as a key value or a core strategy. But most have a more narrow focus than the typical Alliance era national facilitation teams:

- Pioneers in Slovenia is working exclusively within the Free Brethren denomination, avoiding contact with Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. The stated strategy is to start a new group in another town, from which multiplication will occur.
- Of course, the IMB missionaries in Slovenia are focused on working within the Baptist Union only. IMB is one of the biggest proponents of church planting movements, but the missionaries here are struggling to even plant a handful of churches, much less facilitate a CPM.

If most church-planting focused mission agencies will probably work within one denomination, where are the people who will form a national church planting facilitation team? Or do they have it right – is it more effective to work within a single denomination or group of churches than to work broadly in our central and eastern European context? Do more countries in Europe need broad facilitation teams? Which ones? Where have we seen successful models of facilitation teams? Is it something people in SCP Network should try to do (i.e. recruit nationals and expats to form a national facilitation team) in countries that have no broad facilitation team?

If we believe that the idea of a broad facilitation team for a nation is a good thing, what can we do to keep this model from dying with this generation of missionaries, the ones who came in at the end of the Alliance? Is anyone working to make this happen? Where? How? Should the rest of us be involved in this? Or is it more a role for specific agencies and those with more of a regional focus? What role can SCP Network take in this, and who is willing to devote time and energy to it?

Who is waving the banner of broad facilitation in central and eastern Europe? Who are inviting and casting vision for expats and nationals to join existing facilitation teams, and to start teams in countries where there are none?