**FF 23 Oct 2015**

**EAPN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

***Brussels 8-10 October 2015***

**Attendance:**

**Members of the EXCO:** *Maria Jeliazkova (EAPN Bulgaria), Nino Zganec (EAPN Croatia), Karel Schwarz (EAPN Czech Republic), Per Thomsen (EAPN Denmark), Kärt Mere (EAPN Estonia), Jiri Sironen (EAPN Finland), Richard Delplanque(EAPN France), Alexander Kraake (EAPN Germany), Olga Leventis (EAPN Greece), Krisztina Jász (EAPN Hungary), Vilborg Oddsdóttir (EAPN Iceland), Tess Murphy (EAPN Ireland), Vito Telesca (EAPN Italy), Laila Balga (EAPN Latvia), Eitvydas Bingelis (EAPN Lithuania), Nadia Dondelinger (EAPN Luxembourg), Biljana Dukovska(EAPN Macedonia/FYROM), Saviour Grima (EAPN Malta), Johanna Engen (EAPN Norway), Quinta Ansem (EAPN Netherlands), Kamila Płowiec (EAPN Poland), Sérgio Aires (EAPN Portugal), Raluca Mănăilă (EAPN Romania), Jasmina Krunić (EAPN Serbia), Anna Galovicova (EAPN Slovakia), Carlos Susias (EAPN Spain), Sonja Wallbom (EAPN Sweden), Peter Kelly (EAPN UK), Ian Johnston (IFSW), Luigi Leonori (SMES),*

**Secretariat:** *Barbara Helfferich, Fintan Farrell, Philippe Lemmens, Sigrid Dahmen, Magda Tancu, Nellie Epinat.*

**Apologies:** *Eugen Bierling-Wagner (EAPN Austria), David Praile (EAPN Belgium), Ninetta Kazantzis (EAPN Cyprus), Mike Stannett (Salvation Army)*

**Chair: Sérgio Aires, President**

1. **Adoption of Minutes and Agenda**

***Approval of agenda***

* **Decision: The agenda was approved.**
* Fintan distributed some documents from the staff that would be relevant to the discussion on budget and work programme 2016. He apologised for the lateness of distributing the documents but it only became clear that it would be necessary when we received the Bureau’s paper on restructuring.
* Richard – asked participants to speak slowly and use less jargon

**Approval of the Exco minutes 2 July**

* Fintan proposed and it was agreed that it be noted that there was some mistakes in the draft minutes and some different recollections of what was said at the meeting in Bilbao. He noted the following:
* That it is important to distinguish between call for tenders and call for proposals as they have very different legal implications. The 10 calls we had been able to respond to was a mix of call for tenders and call for proposals.
* The section that was described as ‘On Sponsorship’ is more about use of public funds.
* He corrected that what he said in Bilbao was that since the previous Exco the only call that EAPN was following where there was a chance for EO involvement was the FEAD call and that a meeting was set up with EOs to discuss this call.
* If this is what was said in Bilbao then the following amendment from FEANTSA does not stand. In any case he wanted noted that he had no recollection that FEANTSA asked for a brainstorming on the EMIN call because if this had been requested he would have reminded that we already had quite an in depth discussion about EMIN 2 at the December EMIN meetings and that the next stage was to make a proposal that responded to those discussions.
* Maria from Bulgaria wanted it noted that since she will vote abstention for the minutes she would like to explain why. In her view, minutes are important for the democracy of an organization – they should be accurate and detailed. She had asked several times to include comments about how the staff was asked to leave during the previous Exco meeting and about visions on how to cope with the budget deficit. We need accurate minutes in order to know what was proposed. She proposed to have detailed minutes for internal use and circulate shorter versions. We have the same problem for the bureau minutes.
* **Decision: The minutes with the additions from Fintan were approved with one abstention. Decision: There was a vote on what type of minutes we need. Short minutes with just key decisions or longer more detailed minutes. 12 voted for longer more detailed minutes, 4 were against and 7 abstentions – majority wants to go back to more detailed minutes.**
* Sergio reminded that it would be better that people be given a date by which to react to the minutes when they are been sent out.

1. **Activity Report**

Barbara presented the Directors report for the period 20th of June until the 20th of October (report available on member’s room). The following questions were asked:

* Participation to the task force of the Social Platform – who are the participants on behalf of EAPN?.
* Is the EAPN budget entirely funded by the Commission, do you have any private funding?
* For the PeP – it is becoming more and more difficult to attend – EU norms and regulations – difficult topic, we did not have the time to prepare the participants plus there is no interpretation. I as a participant in the meeting, know how difficult it is not to have interpretation. It was said that the principle behind not providing interpretation is that he who doesn’t understand is out. It was pointed out that the work with people experiencing poverty which makes it even more difficult when interpretation costs are being cut.
* TTIP paper. We made the decision that the secretariat would continue working on the paper what happened to the paper.

Barbara responded by saying:

* The secretariat participates to the Platform Task Forces but this is quite complicated because there are too much – even if the new Board of the Social Platform is making an effort to reduce and be more focused in terms of number of issues to follow.
* EAPN has core funding from the EC but it has to bring co-funding that comes mainly from National Networks contributions. We also have income from projects.
* TTIP – I was lost in the process and did not know what to do about it. Two conflicting messages from the FR network came in, there was a miscommunication and the FR network that was supporting the message from the paper on TTIP presented in Bilbao, said later on that did not agree with the message anymore.

Fintan responded regarding the PeP meeting. He reminded that what was sent to National Coordinators the day before is very complete. He believed the preparation asked this year is easier for people experiencing poverty who are coming new to this work to respond to. He also reminded that it does have some real chance to influence the new approach taken by the Commission regarding the social pillar. He acknowledged the problem that it comes late but said he thought the topic and content is not problematic. He expressed his optimism that it will be a good meeting and will have an important impact and people will enjoy talking about the topic.

He explained that on interpretation that the EC wanted to provide interpretation but there was a very specific problem this year to locate rooms where we could use the Commissions interpretation service. But the question of interpretation is not straight forward, we had a very good discussion on this with the National Coordinators in Vienna, it is a pity that not every Network sent someone to the meeting. It is complicated because if you use official interpretation you end up in a rigid/less dynamic room, with a more formal meeting and less interaction, which also impacts on the communication. He also said that for this year we will try to have more support for informal interpretation.

Fintan also gave information on the context for trying to organise this Year’s meeting at a time of restructuring in the Commission, that means we have no clear Director for Social Inclusion and unsure what position the Commissioner would take on the yearly meeting of PeP. In these circumstances we need to be a bit cautious in our approach.

An exchange took place between Alexander, Richard and Barbara on the TTIP paper. Richard said the paper was too much focused on Germany and not enough European. Alexander said he had no problem with adjusting the paper to make it more European but that the secretariat must do that.

**Decision: There was a majority vote in favour of 1) adopting the proposal made by EAPN Germany as discussed in July and 2) That the Secretariat be mandated to update the German paper. It was said that the paper should be finalised in one week.**

Nelly informed the Exco that we had a long discussion in the secretariat on this paper and that it was agreed that Barbara would be the one working on it.

1. **Finances 2015**

Barbara presented the Exco Doc 3.1 – Updated Budget 1st Jan to 31st Dec 2015. She explained that the deficit expected is now significantly reduced and should be more in the region of 18.000 Euro if we stick to what is projected for the rest of the Year. The big difference from what was said in Bilbao comes from:

* Implementing the costs savings agreed in Bilbao
* Being able to reduce some staff expenses by allocating some staff time to projects we have won.
* Good cash income support generated by EAPN Spain for the GA which reduces ‘expenditures’ that we would have to include to reach our matching funds requirements.

Some questions that followed:

* Are we looking at the total budget in this document or just part of the budget?
* The framework is not clear. Why have travel expenses elevated so much?
* We need to speak not only about expenses but also about incomes (co-financing)
* The way staff changes are presented is clear but this system should have been kept throughout the document.
* With staff names it would be good to also have their functions.
* Need to be clearer who is the political responsible for finances.
* Why is the contribution from Members so much less than was forecasted?
* Is it not expensive to have part-time work arrangements? Is this not a problem for EAPN?
* There is a need to have more attention when making budgets.

Responses given by Barbara, Sergio and Philippe included:

* Losing the semester alliance budget in 2015 created a big problem with our budget projections.
* GA costs were much more than predicted. This is also because it was budgeted to have extra people for one day but then in practice it was agreed that extra people (especially people experiencing poverty) could travel with colleagues and so you have increased meals and hotel costs.
* For the travel costs you need to look at the three meetings that happened together in Bilbao. Most of the travel costs are allocated to the GA so it looks like a big overspend but then for the other meetings you see an under-spend in travel costs. It is also the case that some travels to the GA were very expensive.
* What is presented in this document is a mixture of core costs and some costs reductions take account of other incomes particularly from projects.
* The last page tells about income.
* The actualized budget figures is up till 25 Sept, so it looks like an under-spend but then you need to remember that a lot of expenses are in the contracts with Networks and these are not put in the accounting until we get the returns from the Networks.
* The contribution from Members is voluntary so if members don’t give it then it is less than budgeted. However there is still time for members to make their contributions so if you haven’t done so please do now.
* Yes there are more expenses associated to part-time work but of course if all were full time the overall expenses to EAPN would be even more.

The final draft budget will be presented at the next Exco and of course it is for the GA to decide re adoption.

1. **Introduction for the Joint Session – Exco-EUISG**

A short introduction to the joint session EUISG/ExCo we are going to do tomorrow after the policy conference was given. The main activity concerns the Strategic Plan and the follow up of the strategic congress.

Barbara presented the concept note and the revised version of the draft strategic plan. The ExCo was mandated to advance the Strategic Plan. The EUISG is to input its recommendations on the policy objectives. At the end of tomorrow’s session we hope to have agreed Objectives and outcomes and to have made progress on how we will monitor the plan.

There was then time for Questions/comments/clarifications:

Fintan on behalf of the staff raised some issues to do with the draft strategic plan. He wanted it noted that:

* The evaluation report gives a high level of satisfaction for policy work and low satisfaction of governance and yet we problematized policy work and did little on governance.
* The evaluation comes to a conclusion that “EAPN was too staff led”. The staff do not share this assessment and feels that the bureau and secretariat did a good job at working together with members to try to respond to their views.
* The evaluation report says that it is based on a number of methods including in depth interviews with EAPN staff and a workshop with EAPN secretariat. These did not happen.
* In the first page of the draft Strategic Plan it is said “due to a lack of clarity of the objectives set in the previous strategic plan it would not be feasible to evaluate them”. This is not a view shared by staff. If we allocated the time and resources we could have done an evaluation.
* The draft strategic plan says that it is based on a literature review including a review of EAPN strategic plan 2012-2014. No such document exists and no such review was done.

There was concern raised that what we are going to do tomorrow will be to discuss again the

SO’s as we did in Bilbao and we will not advance?

Sergio responded to say we had a strong discussion in Bilbao on the Strategic plan and the GA voted all objectives without one -3rd objective. Tomorrow, the EUISG who wanted to have a more active role in realtion to the policy objectives will have a discussion on the third objective. Tomorrow the ExCo should discuss how we are going to monitor the implementation of the strategic plan - working together with the secretariat and inclusion group

Peter recapped the agenda for the joint meeting.

1. **Joint Session EXCO EUISG**

After a brief introduction the EUISG met separately to address the proposed strategic objectives and expected outcomes and in particular to deal with the objective and outcomes that were rejected at the GA. The Exco met separately to progress the work on evaluation, monitoring and indicators for monitoring the strategic plan. After working on these issues separately the two groups came together again to agree the proposals that came from their discussions.

The EUISG group reported that the version of the strategic plan distributed for the meeting did not include the changes agreed at the General Assembly. They proposed that the objective and outcomes rejected at the GA be now formulated into one expected outcome in the policy objective that was agreed at the GA. They presented two options for this outcome:

* EAPN contributes to the more effective monitoring of relevant policies and their impact on poverty and exclusion throughout Europe. Or
* The monitoring of relevant policies and their impact on poverty and social exclusion throughout Europe is more effective.

It was pointed out that it must be written in a way that it is an outcome and not an action. So the first option was reformulated to “EAPN contributed to the more effective monitoring of relevant policies and their impact on poverty and exclusion throughout Europe”.

**Decision: The proposal to add this version of the outcome or the second version above was put to vote. 14 voted for the revised version of one above. 11 voted for the second version. So the revised version of an outcome indicator will be inserted to the strategic plan.**

The Exco reported that the existing indicators in the strategic plan are too complicated and demanding. We need a more simplified version that takes account of Evaluation, monitoring and indicators.

**Decision: It was agreed to ask the secretariat to make a revised proposal on how to evaluate and monitor the strategic plan and to identify indicators for that purpose.**

The rest of the time was spent on a brainstorming on what are the key policy challenges to be met in the coming period. The following issues were mentioned:

* Effectively integrating and responding to the challenges coming from developments in relation to refugees / migration
* Ensuring continued support from the Commission
* EAPN input to a renewed social agenda in EU in context of discussion on social floor and social pillar
* Maintaining support for PeP Meeting and the processes around the meeting and ensuring we don’t raise false expectations.
* Ensuring respect for principles for effective welfare systems (ref was made to the new EESC report on this topic)
* Maintaining public financial support for anti-poverty NGOs and combating the negative consequences of public procurement rules which will undermine NGOs
* Challenging dominate paradigm, trying to achieve social economic convergence
* Impact of bordering countries collapse. Kiev now announced bankruptcy. This will add to the pressure re migration
* Need for more street action
* Monitoring the use of the 20% for inclusion in the Structural Funds
* Post code access to services
* Huge housing challenges

There was no time to try to systemize the information coming through the brainstorming.

**Decision: It was agreed that the two groups would come together again the next day to look at planning for 2016 and to look at key issues which are hampering the work of EAPN at the moment.**

1. **Strategic Issues: Policy Conference, 17 Oct Messages, EAPN activities re migration crisis**

EXCO members reacted to all 3 items together, ie messages EAPN should convey at EAPN’s conference, as well as 17th Oct and migration crisis. Mainly there is an urgent need to counter the arguments, relayed by certain political parties and media, and also some governments, which put people in need in competition, people in poverty, asylum seekers and migrants. Just as austerity measures are said to be unavoidable when there is long-running evidence that this is not the case, unacceptable quotas are being put in place supporting the idea that the EU cannot cope.

All migrants should be portrayed as not only people in need who, according to our values, we have the duty to welcome, but also as people who bring added value to our societies, notably because our societies are ageing and will soon need young labour forces. This also entails to put, again and again, a system that merchandises people and that does not tackle the real problems of the crisis.

**Messages EAPN should convey**

* Good opportunity with Commissioner present at the Conference
* Need social policy as strong as economic policy
* Need of participation of civil society but also in economic policy, and not only in social policy
* Financial crisis notably in Asia in a few years must be aware that Europe might be even more heavily impacted
* EU still going from one crisis to another. Financial crisis, now migration crisis in addition, and people still waiting,
* All of Europe and EU leaders must support NGO activities. Migration crisis is a concrete example, in many countries civil society take on responsibility that the State should take.
* Perspective of people coming to Europe. Let them speak: what they want is very simple things, live and raise their children in peace, security, dignity.
* Key messages needed to put forward to Minister of social affairs in Finland on social security at stake in Finland
* Poverty is not only linked to money – health, well-being, etc holistic approach
* 10th October International day of Mental Health. Dignity is related to rights.
* EU going from one crisis to another. There is also an internal crisis related to policies. “Macro-economic as constructed now only can deliver policies that generate more poverty, exclusion and inequalities
* Migrants should be treated with respect and dignity, as well as all other people. We can’t just say that they should be treated the same as other poor people. They should not be treated like poor people are in Bulgaria for instance nor should poor people in Bulgaria be treated like they are.
* No bargaining and no competition on social standards
* Support that we need the words well-being, social standards, etc
* Poverty is experienced in vary many ways – not a “one size fits all” solution
* Say we need refugees and migrants
* We need more anger and send this message. Where are the governments?
* Avoid mixing things - Public opinion manipulated that migrants will receive more than nationals in poverty – competition is organized
* Public funding and public procurement is a huge issue at the moment – EAPN will be directly impacted, at EU, national and local levels
* We must talk more strongly about inequalities.
* Social services; we need more outreach on this, we’ve asked rights for refugees to being welcomed in a country. No competition with poor people, they must have access to housing, but likewise for people in poverty.
* “Marketisation” of everything good to mention
* 17 Oct draft statement has interesting messages but big jumps between different sections. We could shape the messages under the key messages in our strategic plan.
* The countries which will manage well in the EU in the coming decades are those who will manage to welcome migrants correctly
* Majority of people still convinced that despite unfairness of the crisis, austerity measures are the only solution – emphasis to put on wealth redistribution, tax evasion, etc, which is the main cause of all problems
* Show positive messages and examples as People are afraid, xenophobia rising… Counterbalance manipulative speeches and maybe even the EU will show support to these
* Our messages need to be put in a more positive way.

Sergio reiterated that we need to speak publically on migration crisis. He also said that he hoped the EUISG group would accept the proposal to have a task force on this topic.

**Decisions:**

* **A group of EXCO members will meet with Barbara to advance the statement of 17th October and present proposals on Saturday which will be used for a press release.**
* **Sérgio expressed it would be desirable to have a statement on the refugee’s crisis proposed at and from the EXCO. Exco meetings should be used to have this kind of output every time we meet, and this is a good opportunity to start. A statement from the Exco should come out of this meeting concerning a subject – refugee’s – that EAPN until now did not speak bout. Press release on 17th October should integrate messages on migration but a separated statement should also be produced. Sérgio asked for a group of volunteers of the Exco to write this statement. This proposal was accepted.**

1. **Follow Up Membership Development Group**

Magda Tancau – presented the main issues discussed during the meeting – please see the report of the meeting distributed with the ExCo documents. Sergio reminded that the ExCo needs to decide about the second capacity building. We cannot just cancel it, we need to propose an alternative because of reporting requirements to the EU Commission. Interesting to have a mutual e-learning tool to understand how networks participate at the national level around the refugee’s crisis; create a mutual learning tool online, great to do it this year and continue it with a task force. We propose to develop it around refugees and migration. It’s about supporting each other, some NNs are more involved than others. As an example EAPN Portugal is quite involved in the building up of a national platform of organizations. If the ExCo agrees, the MDG will continue to develop the online capacity building together with Magda and Nellie.

Comments that were made on the proposals coming from the Membership Development Group:

* we should develop more online tools for working in general.
* it is easier to choose a tool when you know exactly what is being used for, if it’s for information collection purposes you need a certain tool, whilst for interaction you need a different tool. Not all details have to be there but be clear on what the members want to do.
* it is important to be able to build up good arguments against competing discourses between refugees and homeless. We need to learn how to position ourselves in these debates and cope with them.
* We can have a step by step approach first collect practices and experiences, exchange on them, etc.
* EAPN Germany also thinks of developing that. We are in a thinking process about the questions, we organized a workshop on fighting xenophobia and racism with an expert and we are now discussing with him how to develop these arguments. We had a workshop and work more internally on the topic, we organize a conference – preparing a handout on how to deal with this kind of problems are keen on contributing to the discussion.
* In UK we have experience with different persons coming out of migration and would be happy to contribute.
* Baltic States who never had had refugees – fear and lack of understanding around the refugees’ issue. In Estonia today, there is a lot of fear around refugees to the point that local people are prepared to go to war. Our national networks need advice, knowledge and tools on how to handle the public opinion. A questionnaire was sent around local governments and 200 answered NO to accommodating refugees.
* There is a crossover between the development work and the task force. Can we mandate the MDG – to develop the tool by the end of the year?
* There are many NGOs in France who work on the issue, in FR we have a long tradition for hosting migrants, and however, administrative procedures to stay on French land are very complicated. There are 2 contradictions in France – the government facilitates the measures but in reality in order to stay in the country is more and more difficult – the rise of right wing parties – xenophobic policies. There is this propaganda which French people have in their heads – fighting against poverty becomes about finding housing for refugees.
* International media has a crucial role. When people see crowds of migrants and negative images they become scared and negative.
* In Slovakia: we have few migrants and the Catholic Church developed a threatening discourse about Muslims, this manipulated the public opinion and turned them against refugees. Maybe we could address all these issues and discuss the negative factors.
* In Sweden we are receiving thousands of refugees, positive view of the refugee situation is that today we have ex-Yugoslavian refugees integrated in Swedish society. We have good experiences. I am not saying there are not problems, when thousands of people are coming is difficult to arrange for shelters and food. If you look back and see how the Estonians, Finish, Yugoslavians have ended up in our country, there are many positive examples.
* Malta is a small country and high numbers of refugees is perceived as a threat. Competing discourses on minimum wage, profiling the migrants on skills and needs. Mental health issues around the migrants – sitting around all day, without work, communication barriers, sexual abuses. Their aim is not to stay in a small country but to go to Europe.
* One of the Swedish ministers is a former Serbian refugee and she made a contribution to the ETUC Congress. We will make it available online and use it to give a positive example.
* Denmark: the refugees’ phenomenon is a consequence of EU foreign politics and policies. Secondly, we have to look at this people as to a resource – aging EU population that will result on a shortage of labor. We need solidarity around Europe, we need an EU solution to the refugees’ crisis.
* In Iceland, the government, NGOs and the media work together. People and the media reacted to the number announced by the government saying that is not enough. It is very important to have the media on board
* Russia is bombing Syria, no home for refugees. In Estonia we have created a movement – Friendly Estonia, and in consequence we keep receiving threatening messages.
* How can we grant security for both hosts and refugees?
* Criminalization is an issue – criminalizing people who are without official papers and the ones who help them. We saw what citizens’ solidarity means in Nordic and Southern countries.
* Thousands of people are going through Serbia, refugees do not want to stay. Serbia is being fenced by countries around – Hungary raised a fence, then Croatia and Serbians are asking what is the EU doing? Is this the EU that we want to be part of? The issue is bigger than one country. Help left in the hands of individuals.
* In Luxembourg there is a movement initiated by 2 students collecting help for migrants; the help coming from these students is larger than the help coming from certain institutions. The students’ movement is showing the history of refugees and this has a good impact on the public.

**Decision: the online tool should be developed with the theme of migration/refugees.**

1. **Restructuring**

Sérgio made an introduction remembering what is at stake. As a consequence of the structural deficit but also as a consequence of the strategic congress at the last Exco meeting the new Bureau was asked to preparer a proposal for a restructuring of EAPN. In the meanwhile the Bureau received different contributions (some of them formally – as the open letter from the Danish Network). The Bureau then decided to make an effort to put all those contributions in one single document. A document that is of course open and it is not a proposal from the Bureau but a starting point for a discussion. The floor was then given to the Director.

***Director Leaving:***

Barbara said EAPN has a lot to give and is rich in experiences, but the “elephants in the room” as so many times said in the last meeting in Bilbao sadden me. She said she was very excited to start working at EAPN, although she was aware of the problems: adjusting to a new EP, new Commission, and former Director would be part of the team, and where there were some very strong people, namely an ex-President and ex-Director. In fact there was a Triumvirate: Barbara Helfferich, Fintan Farrell and Sian Jones. Fintan, an ex-President and ex-Director continued to come into the office even though, as a Fundraising officer he said he wouldn’t. All people did excellent work but changes had to be made in her view. Coordination was very difficult and the Bureau trying to support the Director intervened a lot. The roles were not very clear. It was a difficult situation and every change was met with active/passive resistance. There is no turnover at EAPN, staff is in place for a long time and acts independently. She said it came to the point where she did not like to go to the office anymore, it was the feeling of ‘I against you’ and we were all under a lot of pressure. Mistakes were made on all sides. The secretariat is structured horizontally with no role defined for Director. I decided to get in an external person, although staff said they had done this before and it did not work. The external person saw everyone and just when I thought we cracked it, staff so much resisted that the bureau decided to stop the whole process. She concluded that she no longer could see her role as Director anymore and given the circumstances cannot continue in this way. She informed the Executive that this is why she will leaving on 15 October. She expressed the opinion that EAPN does not need a Director, the organization will run by itself and concluded that she is both happy and sad to leave. Barbra was then excused for the rest of the meeting.

* Quinta said very strongly that this should be a lesson for the network, we should look inside ourselves and be an example. She expressed that she is very angry about the situation.
* Philippe said we have to look at practical issues, who signs the papers, etc. .
* Vito: this is a failure in EAPN, I do not accept Barbara’s demission. This is exclusion of people not inclusion, Barbara should reflect on her decision.
* Nellie asked that members be reasonable and professional and listen to both sides. You have just heard one side now.

Peter: who was chairing the session asked people to be calm to take a coffee break and that we would continue the discussion after the break.

Fintan was given the floor to make a reflection from staff perspective: He said that for staff Bilbao was a low point, we felt excluded in the organization. We were asked to leave in the EXCO and that gives a good image of how we were feeling. However more importantly Bilbao was a turning point, we decided as staff to become more proactive and more engaged to look forward and learn from what we have done. We presented our ideas to the Bureau. New bureau was very open to our ideas and said they wanted that kind of proactive staff. The signs were positive and for us things had already moved. We put forward our ideas for restructuring and now have a thoughtful proposal from the Bureau which reflects some of our ideas. However we would still have big concerns but the important things is that there is time and a process in the Bureau proposal for everybody to share their ideas and concerns and to build towards a consensus at the 2016 GA for solutions that would be implemented from 2017. 2016 budget and work programme remains a bit of a mystery but we will discuss that later.

Now in light of this news we understand better the preparation of this meeting. However I and I am sure the staff will have been disappointed by Barbra’s statement which in my view tries to scapegoat the staff for the problems. I don’t want to get distracted by Barbara’s statement but I would like to address two issues she raised.

1. Fintan to work from home and then worked from office. I can only say that I asked Barbara if she preferred that I worked from home or from the office and she said she would prefer me in the office so she could help to direct my work. The first time I hear that my being in the office was a problem was today.
2. External person: staff did not resist, we were told it would be a confidential process, then this person makes a report to the Bureau, we have never been shown this report. In light of this lack of clarity we were not ready to continue till we were shown the brief the external person had for the work. We never received this brief.

We would also like to say that the way it was proposed to let Magda go and the fact that it was proposed to let Magda go with no discussion with staff was a final straw and we said clearly to Barbara and the Bureau that we would resist this decision.

Sergio: It is important to clarify some points particularly due to the fact that we are facing a moment of strong emotions and some things were not supposed to happen. When Barbara expressed her difficulty to stay with EAPN, we came to an agreement on the process and decided that she would be given a notice on the 15th of October with a notice period till the end of December. This was considered the most dignifying and comfortable manner to end the situation in as good conditions as possible. The notice if necessary according to the Belgian law would specify the following motive: her vision does not match with the vision of the organization anymore. This means that if it will be approved she stays until December. It is difficult for Barbara to continue to come to the office and we have to see how we handle this.

Peter: It is a difficult moment now, we have to take decisions on the future of EAPN, and we should be honest and clear with each other.

**Decision: In light of the difficult decisions and discussions to be held a proposal was made to not have the joint session with the EUISG group that had been agreed the previous day. This proposal was accepted by vote with: 2 abstentions, 0 against and all others in favour.** Sergio was asked to communicate this decision to the EUISG members.

Peter opened the floor for comments:

* Quinta: I apologize, we have to look forward. We should analyze that we have not been able to recognize exclusion mechanisms. I was mad about the system, the system that we fight, I am not trying to blame anyone. We have to learn lessons from that that is the only way to go forward.
* Kart: what can we learn from this story? If there is a conflict, you have to deal with it. I feel responsible too. EAPN has to be more careful on management.
* Per: three big points on agenda, how are we going to proceed? Barbara can leave with dignity. But people in Brussels also need to continue with their work.
* Tess: Bilbao felt uncomfortable. Is there a contingency plan? Can we nip these things in the bud? How can we deal with this role confusion?.
* Sonja: we should have procedures for the future. We have been bad employers, left staff with problems, and stopped them from doing a good job. We should not leave things just going on. Talking is not enough, we should have acted.
* Peter: Bureau tried to solve some issues, but we might not have done the right things.
* Sergio, We tried several actions to solve the problems. We tried to mediate this conflict but with no success. Although the efforts as President of the previous Bureau I assume the responsibility. This is not only Barbara’s fault and, of course, as you can imagine this will have consequences in a near future.
* Nadia: as a new member of the Exco I could see immediately that there were problems. Staff present in Exco meetings is exceptional for her on a national level. Staff should not feel bad if they are not in the Exco. Better for staff to get just the results and not the whole discussion. Staff representative ok, but could be asked to leave if Exco thinks necessary.
* Raluca: we need to see what we can prevent for the future. There are 2 sides in the Exco, tension has moved further, moves to NN and member organizations. We need a common position, otherwise it will remain as a conflict.
* Per: has had discussion with other Per, employees should have a vote in the bureau.
* Maria: There are different practices, we have our own practices, it is unacceptable to make staff leave the room. Some mechanisms in our structures are opposite to what a network like ours should be. We preach externally and do something else internally.
* Richard: has only been on the Exco for 6 months, problems occur in other organisations too. Here we have a team that has worked together for years, when a new Director comes who has a different way of working, both sides want to impose their own way. Needs a discussion if you want to make it work. When the staff was asked to leave the meeting in Bilbao why was Barbara not asked to leave?
* Jasmina: Situation is much more complex than what she thought when she came to the Bureau. You are tempted to take sides but we cannot afford to take sides. Should get in an independent expert who will evaluate what can be done. It is an opportunity to see how to be positive.
* Sergio: The fact that we are divided now and that the conflict passes to us is a long standing story. The division always existed. Some members always defended more vertical approach in terms of management (like we had with the first Director, Marie-Françoise Wilkinson) and some others a more horizontal one. When Fintan became Director clearly we moved to a more horizontal approach and when Barbara came in (although not alone) we tried to move to a new one – also based on the external evaluation. We always have to live with this. It will not be possible to find a complete agreed model of management (31 NN plus EOs). We are too far away from each other and we have to live with this vision management conflict. About confidentiality is a very important issue in any organization. We are not less transparent or democratic if we have to be careful about some decisions or information’s.
* Peter: With a management group of this size it is very difficult.
* Jiri: He is ok with a staff representative on Exco. But would ask staff to leave when discussion about future.
* Ian: This problem is also an opportunity to move on. We have to take interim measures. What is going to happen? We should make a decision and debate without the staff.
* Quinta: how painful to feel this lack of trust. We are forcing things instead of having a dialogue. We tend to hide things instead of spitting them out. A lot is based on distrust, could we do something with this lack of trust? We should build upon this, support an open dialogue. It is important that we practice what we preach.
* Kamila: does the bureau have a plan? Do we need a staff person on the bureau?
* Anna: there is too much involvement in inner conflicts. Divide and govern. Now Barbara has to be let move on and we must find a solution.
* Luigi: if we want to find solutions to a conflict, we need external people for this.
* Saviour: agrees with Jasmina. We need collaboration and need to build trust in each other. Swap analysis about past and future. These are democratic issues, we should examine everything in a positive way.
* Carlos: it is very hard to separate things. I have been in the ExCo for a long time, we have seen many political events. One day we have a commissioner in our event and the next day we look like an organization falling apart. We need to keep our positive image. We have always had a very powerful secretariat, capable, maybe we had disagreements in the past with the secretariat, and we have a technical secretariat which has worked very well. When we take joint decisions we make sure they follow a clear path. EAPN has grown very fast in a short time and it is very difficult to manage this. The ExCo and the secretariat had to deal this. We had almost 7 years of restructuring. We have to see how we can address this in a timely manner. I think we need to calm down things in the organization. We have urgent decisions that need to be taken in a calm way. We need to do this in time, we cannot rush things. We have to come out of this ExCo, as an organization who knows how to address difficulties.
* Richard: there are two things: 1) we ask Barbara to leave and 2) we have to replace her immediately. There is a human dimension and a practical dimension. Barbara has difficulties being in this position, do we want her to continue this? It has been a difficult position which has affected her heath. Transition is needed for the Bureau and the daily management. It would be better not to impose on her to stay. We need to avoid this problem in the future, have an interim director, before hiring the new director – consensus between the bureau members and staff and prepare the staff to work with the new director.
* Vito: I think is important to know what Belgian legislation stipulates.
* Sergio – it was checked. Sergio: another possibility is letting Barbara go immediately and pay her the full 3 months’ salary. Another serious consequence is that Barbara as EAPN director is vice-president of the social platform and we will loose that position. So, another solution is If Barbara goes on the 15th and we can have an interim who will sign documents.
* Tess: I think we should ask Barbara if she agrees with this proposal. The interim period whether for 3 months or a year could leave us sometime to discuss about our goals and identity.
* Peter Kelly: It was agreed with Barbara that she would be given notice on the 15th and she would stay until the end of the year also because of the social platform. It could be hard to re negotiate this now.
* Tess: if you had the discussion already and as you said would be uncomfortable to go back to her with another decision maybe we should first see if we can go back to her with another decision.
* Sergio: given the current situation, it could be a relief for her.
* Fintan: Barbara has spoken about wanting to finish the restructuring and doing the plan with the Bureau. I think the mandate should be given to the Bureau to solve the situation with Barbara and if possible to releive her of responsibilities as soon as possible. If it is impossible to do this and you cannot change the agreement, you should put clear limits to what she would do. It should not include big tasks like restructuring.
* Ana: I support Fintan. The reality is that we should have a new person, as it is not good for Barbara to continue work in EAPN.
* Ian: I’d like to ask the ExCo to agree that Barbara completes the mandate as vice president of the social platform.
* Sergio: it is for another 2 years. It is too long, it’s impossible.

**Decision: Sergio proposed a vote that the Exco to give a mandate to the Bureau to negotiate with Barbara that she be let go as planned but that she would be relieved of responsibilities as soon as possible. This proposal was accepted: 4 abstentions, Against: 0, Rest in favour**.

***Discussion re Interim solution:***

* Carlos: how will we manage our organization? We need somebody who will at least put a signature on docs. We have a budgetary problem, which is not disastrous. We have to make decisions for 2016 and we need to link 2016 to the restructuring process that EAPN has to undergo. We need a timescale for replacing the director – we have to set out a job profile for who is in charge and for the secretariat.
* Sonja: Most natural thing is for Fintan to become interim director, would be the smartest solution.
* Vito: regarding the interim director I propose that the president becomes the interim director. Regarding the preparation of the new director of EAPN, we have to choose a steering group. I do not know if the Bureau wants to take on board this task and prepare this with the staff.
* Sérgio: I make another proposal: give mandate to the bureau to speak to secretariat about the acting role of director. We think we should ask all members of the secretariat, also those who are not here now. We will also agree on the period – 3 or 6 months or a year.
* Ian: I do not like the term acting role, I prefer the term interim director.
* Fintan: the proposal from Peter is a good one and I think that the interim should last until the next GA because then you can handle the preparations of that and complete the restructuring and you handle how you advertise for a new director within that process.
* Jiri: It sounds like a good proposal but does the Bureau have time resources to continue this immediately? It was pointed out that Bureau work is all voluntary.

**Decision: Peter: we are asking you to mandate the Bureau to speak to the secretariat about the acting director role and period. The bureau should discuss and agree the practicalities of the different options. This proposal was accepted: Abstentions: 4, Against: 1, rest in favour.**

Carlos: there will be many rumors and we have to handle them. We have to see who is able to explain things so that in the next few months we can present a clear image. We should find an interim director as well. On the political level we need to act quickly in order to avoid damaging the image of the organization.

**Decision: There was also agreement that Fintan would make an interim communication of what was happening to: our contact person in the Commission, to Social Platform and to a limited number of people who EAPN works closely with until we have clearer agreement and can communicate more widely**.

***Discussion re professional help from an organizational specialists***

* Raluca: I think an external consultant would be beneficial to lead a process of analysis and reflection on why it happened, why it lasted so long, why it ended as it ended, what are the consequences of this for the organizations and propose some concrete recommendations. This is like a divorce. We should wait until mediation is in place. We need a professional to help create guidelines
* Tess: Governance process, audit all your systems, people tell you where your systems are failing. And we need clear guidelines in terms of internal governance.
* Jasmina: my idea was to hire an Organisational Development expert who will facilitate a process where the staff discusses the issues and together with the Exco they come up with a proposal. Good to know where we stand before we introduce a new person in the role of the director.
* Quinta: would like to have an expert who could coach or facilitate us to look at things in a certain way. An external could also be part of the thinking of the new paradigm.
* Ian: some people are encouraging us to look back on what happened, what Tess was saying was more technical and required a different level of expertise.
* Fintan: we should be mindful of resources. We could be talking about a budget of 5000 to 10 000 euro and the question is can we afford it? Something significant would require at least 10 to 20 days.
* Sergio: let’s take it step by step, let’s try to find and Organisational Development person, see what resources are needed for the work and then we can decide if we can afford to allocate those resources or not.

**Decision: The proposal to have external organisational support was put to the vote: Abstentions: 4, Against: 0, Rest in favour**

***Bureau Paper Re Restructuring***

Doc. 7,3 is thought to be useful. It was clear it is not a proposal from the Bureau, nor collective document. It is should be seen as a proposal to launch a discussion towards a decision-making process at Exco in March 2016 and finally at the GA 2016.

**Decision: The Exco agreed to follow the process and time table outlined in the paper from the Bureau. This paper to be distributed to all members by email with a reminder of the timeline to be followed.**

***Budget and Work Programme 2016***

There was a complicated exchange on the projected budgets for 2016. There was a lot of upset by the very rushed way decisions were made in relation to the Budget that was submitted to the Commission and the proposal to delete the post of Development Officer.

**Decision: The EXCO requested that the budget and work programme be revised, taken account of the principle decisions by the General Assembly, while respecting the budgetary limits and recognizing the need to have the agreement of the Commission. The EXCO also supported the proposal that core budget and project budget be separated but, at the same time, to have a global budget of EAPN. The Exco gave a mandate to the Secretariat to come with a proposal of a final budget and work programme for 2016 (also taking in consideration what will be the final budget approved by the European Commission) and to the Bureau to prepare a final decision about the Work Programme and budget for 2016. The Bureau asked expressly the Exco to approve a decision to accept that in 2016 EAPN will have a structural deficit (without any contributions from project funding) of around 72.000 Euros. This was voted was accepted 1 abstention, 0 against and all others in favour.**

***EAPN Fund Raising Strategy:*** There was no time for this discussion.

***Staff Proposal re staff representation on Bureau:*** There was no time for this discussion.

1. **Evaluation of Meeting** There was no time for this discussion
2. **Any Other Business:** None