**EXCO DOC N 1.2 31st of July 2014**

**EAPN EXCO – Tallinn**

**26-27 June 2014**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Thursday, 27 June 2014**

1. **Welcome, Apologies and short input by Minister of Social Affairs.**

Sérgio Aires as President of EAPN welcomed participants and introduced the meeting. He welcomed the Estonian Minister of Social Affairs: Mrs Helmen Kütt to the EXCO and invited her to make a short intervention.

**Speech by Minister of Social Affairs: Mrs Helmen Kutt.**

Mrs Kütt spoke of the great honour of joining the EXCO meeting. She welcomed the work of EAPN members as crucial for the fight against poverty, underlining the importance of exchanging experiences and learning. She presented to Kärt Mere (Estonian representative in the Exco and Vice-Presidente of EAPN) a framed letter thanking her for all her work which she carried out with ‘heart and head’, and the presentation of a heart-shaped flower. Mrs Kütt said that the Estonia Government is using the FEAD programme with local authorities and NGOs to help to provide material support/food aid: “with a small amount of money it’s possible to do big things”. 15% goes to NGOs. Poverty is growing in the cities, but the situation is worse in rural areas. Currently few NGOs are getting fund support, and she recognizes that this is a big problem. She will work closely with EAPN Estonia to improve the situation.

**1a) Agenda and Matters Arising**

The revised agenda was approved.

Clarification from EAPN Germany was asked about the finalization of the background paper from the last meeting, and how the revisions were taken on board. Sergio Aires confirmed that the revisions were minuted and the discussions on Friday would follow up specifically on this theme.

1. **Director’s Activity Report**

Barbara Helfferich presented the Director’s report. She highlighted the impact of staff reductions and reduced funding, but underlined that the staff with strong commitment was still managing to fulfil the work programme. Much of the work is delivered through the EUISG on Europe 2020. She underlined the work of the EU Semester Alliance that EAPN is coordinating as a cross-sectoral alliance on the Semester with 3 pilot projects (DK, BG, and IE). She summarized the work on Structural Funds, Employment and Active Inclusion and of the policy task forces. In the project area – there are 2 key projects: EMIN, coordinated by EAPN and DRIVERS has 5 national partners, coordinated by EAPN secretariat. In terms of Alliances – the Social Platform continues to be the main focus, with the Spring Alliance reconstituting itself, with less engagement in the Alter summit. EAPN needs to see how it wants to engage. Preparations for the EU Meeting of People experiencing poverty are on course, with Commission funding, with Fintan as the main organizer. Next round of funding coming up in August. EAPN is looking at new funding sources for different activities.

*Questions*:

* Q: Who will do the follow up on Vincent’s work/Structural Funds?
* A: We’ll see about what happens to the funding. But something has to go. Exco should decide the priorities.
* Q: “Poverty School”, what is it?
* A: The aim is to provide more space for members to talk about activities on the ground and then to show how this can be linked to EU level (ie learning forum). However this is also dependent on the possibility of finding financial resources to do it.
* Q: What criteria are you going to use to evaluate the alliances?
* A: This is something that needs to be developed.
* Q: Work on elections isn’t highlighted and how far the members engaged?
* A: There will be a session on this on Saturday, evaluating the campaign and on follow up.
* Q: PEP hearing in the EP, got good support from MEPs, but it’s not reflected.
* A: It’s in the manifesto and will be followed up. PEP meeting this year is co-funded by the Commission but it will not happen not in the European Parliament.
* Q: We valued the documents presented. With the funding cuts we should change the focus and our priorities. Need to integrate our approach, across the different areas – structural funds, civil society engagement, poverty with sustainable development.

*Further arguments raised by the President*

* It’s not possible to have the same level of work and deliverables as in the past, it’s time to make priorities – back to basics. There has been a change in the relationship with the Commission, and this makes it very difficult, with a focus on projects. We will need to discuss this development and the impact with the Commission, in the context of the new funding framework. EAPN should continue to be a reliable partner in the European Union not just to the Commission and make clear that EAPN was created as a part of the EU project – which refused to accept an EU with Poverty and Social Exclusion.
* EAPN is also not just an advocacy organisation – our members are in most of the cases service providers who use advocacy as tools. We are part of the European Union project. The Commission is increasingly unhappy to fund our advocacy work but they must recognise our real nature and that’s something we must focus pretty much in the near future and with the new representatives.
* EAPN needs to package our work from the national level, to make it valuable to the EU institutions. The EP elections were very important, it’s a chance to ally in a more stable way to the EP. However it’s not clear if the Commission will fund this work.
1. **Finances**

Presentation by the Director of the current state of play and new round of EU funding for 2015. (See power point).

*Questions*

* Q: Was it a decision not to finance more staff costs under the projects?
* A: All staff members have been brought back into the core budget to secure existing staff in 2015 budget.
* Q: Why is there still a budget line on translations?
* A: This happens only for the contracts for the national networks.

Barbara presented the new funding call for EU networks promoting poverty reduction with deadline of 20 August. The 4 priorities are all related to Europe 2020, European Semester engagement and implementation. 10 million Euros for 16 networks with maximum of 1 million, with a separate call for building alliances likely in September.

***Questions/Discussion points***

Q: In the 4th area – a proposal was made to start an area on studies – is this a possibility?

Q: Drivers project was under FP7, can EAPN apply for Horizon 2020?

A: We need to look at funding opportunities but make priorities. With support from the EP it is likely that EMIN project could be continued, also capacity building and other calls.

Fintan clarified that payments on EMIN made as advances, so the spend is much bigger, the project is on track. Issue of staff costs in the project is an evolution. But future projects will need to make a more appropriate reflection in the budget. Huge amount of unbudgeted staff time. EAPN cannot take on an FP7, because of financial liabilities, but can be a partner.

Co-financing is still a major challenge.

**ACTION**

* The national contracts need to be finalized, a last reminder will be sent with a deadline. After the deadline the funding for the national contracts cannot be guaranteed.

**4. Membership Development Issues (16h15 – 16h45)**

Tanya Basarab presented updates on building knowledge about National Networks, the implementation of the MASS, the renewed training and capacity building strategy, the enlargement of the network, and funding for antipoverty organisations (see PowerPoint presentation). The President thanked Tanya and the Training and Capacity Building Task Force for the work, and reminded about the proposal to create a permanent Exco group to follow-up on development and other membership issues, including MASS, training and capacity-building, and enlargement. Sérgio and Letizia urged members to send their annual reports as soon as possible, and emphasized the importance of having this information, for the good management of the network. Tanya also reminded that some networks have not sent reports for many years now. Graciela Malgesini (EAPN Spain) added that the size and importance of the European network is also very useful for national networks, as they can show that they are part of an important European structure.

***Action Point: All National Networks who haven’t done so, to send their annual report asap.***

**5. Membership Applications: Croatia (17h00 – 17h30)**

Aleksandra Selak [Živković](http://www.cisp.htnet.hr/tkosmomi.htm) made a presentation about the application to join EAPN on behalf of the Croatian Anti Poverty Network – CAPN. (see PowerPoint). She clarified the situation with the competing antipoverty Croatian network, called Pulse of the Nation – they focus more on humanitarian aid and charity, rather than empowerment and strategic action, so there is no reason why the two cannot merge in one network. CARITAS Croatia is very actively involved, but, for statutory reasons, declined membership in the network – apparently, this also happens in other countries (eg, Italy). Gilles suggested that CARITAS Europa could try to mediate this situation, because in other countries (Spain, Luxemburg etc) they are essential members of the national antipoverty network. Carlos and Maria Jeliazkova made points about making poverty (and its causes) more visible in the Croatian APN documents, including in the Vision.

***Decision: The EXCO supports CAPN’s application by unanimity.***

**6. Preliminary results of the evaluation of EAPN**

Peter Kelly introduced the presentation by the EAPN evaluators.

José Manuel Fresno & Cornelia Rauchberger, the external evaluating team, presented the preliminary findings resulting from the evaluation questionnaire (see PowerPoint presentation). Questions were raised about the concrete follow-up and how to come up with solutions for the issues identified. The evaluators said that a lot of suggestions were made about how to change things, and that they will compile all of them in the full report – but afterwards, it is up to EAPN to choose and decide what are the next steps. Sérgio reminded that the external evaluation was called for by the Exco, and that it is up to the Exco to be consistent with the decisions it made and follow them up, including on this topic. By the way, a part of the results were already quite important for the discussion we are going to have in the World Café.

**Part II: Strategic Discussion**

**7. Setting the Scene**

Letizia introduced the methodology and timetable for the World Café referring also to the document and questions which were sent beforehand. She also referred to the proposal to enlarge the Bureau and that a concrete proposal had already been tabled by the Bureau.

Sérgio then outlined the context in which the world café discussion was taking place. He said EAPN issues were larger and more complex than those in Europe 2020 . He underlined that Exco members were appointed to act in the interest of EAPN and that they had strategic, communication, fundraising and member development responsibilities. It was important that there was an adequate support system at national level. He said that there was in particular the idea to create – among the members of the EXCO – a membership development group. He also referred to what an enlarged Bureau could do and how the current workload could better delivered. He also reminded Exco members that the proposed changes were in view of 2015 when they would take effect.

**8.-9. World Café**

***The EXCO divided into 6 groups for the World CAFÉ discussi*on**

**10. Plenary Discussion and Wrap Up and Vote**

The Exco reconvened at 18:00 for a final discussion on the results of the World Café.

Exco Members requested that:

* The secretariat writes up what was in the flipcharts, send back to Exco members to reflect on it and then come up with a conclusion.
* The final minutes should reflect the discussion on the Strategic Approach.

It was pointed out that the work of the world café had been divided into two parts: first on the immediate future taking account of the budget implication; and secondly on the more strategic outlook.

Sérgio summarized the conclusions of the discussions during the world café.

1. **On better fulfilling the role of the Exco between national and EU level**
* Resources – we need to understand that we are all volunteers
* Translation of documents remains a challenge
* People working for networks (the few) are not fully employed
* There is too much EU jargon in the documents
* Exco members at EU level are not members in their national boards, not having full power/mandate to bring the results from EU discussions into the National Networks
* In some countries NGOs are not so organised as in other countries and size of country also matters – for some it is easy to meet and for others more difficult, in terms of resources.

**Recommendations:**

The following were recommendations which emerged from the discussions:

* Social media, blogs etc – be creative on communication
* Use expertise of National Networks (not having to hire someone else)
* Project work can facilitate engagement – ex. EMIN and EP campaign showed that there’s a good way to bridge National and EU levels
* More engagement of people experiencing poverty (PEP) at national level could be a good idea
* Europe-focused meetings at national level could help to bridge the work – connected with lack of resources but also that Exco members do not sit on the boards.
* Supporting NNs on developing and reinforcing their capacity – a key priority – linking to Member Development Group establishment.

**Clear recommendations to National Networks:**

* Where possible, make it even legally binding, Exco member should be on the board of the NN – in a position to have enough power to bridge National and European levels.
* Talked about possibility of hiring a person in each NN to make the coordination between National and EU levels easier.
1. **On fulfilling the mandate of the Exco regarding the work on a more sustainable development model**
* EUISG covers some of this work
* It was mentioned that too much time is spent presenting documents that were sent out in advance and also that too much time goes to management issues
* On alternative models – members agree that it is a strategic issue to follow
* Possibility of using outside experts in EAPN meetings on the topic (from NNs and EOs)
* More dynamic methodologies of world café/thematic discussions
* Possibly one task force on policy could do this job

**Proposal:**

* Kick-off discussion picking up on what was done in the past – from next meeting on
* The Bureau and staff to prepare – this complements other work with our own agenda – emphasizing a clear message from EAPN on what kind of world we would like to see
* Persons from previous subgroups to work on it.

Sérgio also pointed out that the approval of an enlarged Bureau, would free the Exco for such types of discussions... Trying to have Exco meetings more focused on content (1 day on reflection and discussions and 1 day on decisions). He proposed that the next Exco meeting could be divided into 1. Strategic planning and 2. On alternative models. Knowing that core business would still need to be discussed because we would come out of negotiations with EC, Convention on Poverty etc…

1. **Delivering on core work and projects/ national capacity**

**Messages**

* EAPN should continue to secure core funding at EU and national levels, for example the work on 20% of ESF allocated to the fight against poverty should be followed closely by NNs, if governments are aware of this, if it is put in practice, why there is no space for capacity building of NGOs to participate in the fight against poverty at national, regional and local levels…
* Start thinking about how to go public about the cuts that the EC did the way it was done - on public funding for NGOs and civil society. Bureau recommends to wait a bit to know who is coming into the EC, see if the new Commission keeps the same intention of pushing CSO engagement into a project-based approach – then EAPN, with other organisations, should run a visible action also in terms of public opinion.
* More public action nationally brings visibility but also opportunity to get funds
* On project approach: reconfirming a direction that EAPN is following already for the last 3 years – we have core business funding but will also take a more structured way to building a projects approach/wing – connected with the mission and vision of the Network – complementing what we have to do as a network with other things.
* Need to be cautious because it increases workload but also resources – NNs can promote projects where EAPN Europe is a partner and/or EAPN Europe promotes projects where NNs are partners or another European organisation leading where EAPN and NNs are partners.
* Make EAPN National projects more visible at European level – some work done by NNs doesn’t get enough visibility in the European network.
* At EU level continue demanding more funds for NGOs and that calls for proposals coming out are also accessible to NGOs (currently big consortia, targeting universities, public authorities or big structures).
* More creative in terms of projects (not only actions but also audiences – local and regional level because some NNs have good expertise).
* PEP meetings still the most important project we have.

**Comments:**

* When proposing research projects, it would be interesting to identify if its action-research or participative-research. Difficult if in your NN research is not among the strategic objectives.
* Develop partnerships and project ideas (at proposal level) that do not relate to existing call but a direct basic interest to EAPN to follow the topic. This could relate to the agenda and issues that EAPN is interested to follow that would go into both project and core work.
* On pro-activeness – good hope that a follow up to EMIN project would be put in place, and hope that EU PEP meetings will happen so some discussions can be done early. When concrete ideas come up, they should be written up and work be done more pro-actively.
* For example if the Bureau is enlarged, some of these opportunities can be followed by the Bureau. EAPN’s strategic approach is going forward with doing projects with a purpose.
1. **Improving cooperation between EXCO and EUISG: European and national level**

**Messages:**

* The majority appears to agree that EAPN needs to continue to follow the European agenda. EAPN has its own agenda but it must also try to influence the EU one, change it and make it visible and understandable for our members, countries.
* EAPN should put forward its own proposal on integrated European anti poverty strategies This could be done within Europe 2020.
* There was consensus that a focus on macroeconomics is important. Might be complicated but if that is the agenda, we need to work on it more proactively.
* We should look into different ways of collecting info, other tools (apart from analysis – put voices of PEP in the reports showing the impact on poverty that NRP decisions contain). Ex. Concrete measures in NRPs that affect the lives of people – concrete impact of macroeconomic on daily lives of people.
* There was one proposal to create member-led clusters of interests – 3-4 NNs that want to focus on a specific issue. But that depends on the energy of the Networks. Cannot become the work of EAPN, but if possible to find twinning spaces inside EAPN (for example, many work on Roma issue) – could be a virtual or physical space. It would be the responsibility of members to organise themselves. However, we also need to deal with the constant complaint that we are overworked, we are volunteers and cannot manage everything.
* Focus in the process should stay on CSRs – most directly linked to structural funds can be a way to be more dynamic and interesting for the national level.
* Mainstream better the work of EUISG in the National Networks (similar problem with the representation of Exco members, work overload etc.). Sometimes it seems that it is kept in a box. Any group’s work in EAPN should be known by everyone, used by everyone etc. There is a need for capacity building. This is an issue of development, of supporting the networks, making them able to fulfill their objectives.
* The recommendation to meet once a year with EUISG is a very good practice.
* Where possible there should be joint responsibility of Exco and EUISG member to bring info to National level (ex: 2020 Strategy groups, or European groups are some methods used in NNs to bring this knowledge to the members and engage them).
* If both EUISG + Exco members are on boards of NNs it would be even better.
* More direct involvement of PEP in the national work – bottom-up approach would bring greater benefit.
* Must follow the agenda but also think “out of the box” (EAPN agenda together with EUISG). Streaming meetings could be a proposal.
* Short videos could be prepared to present our publications and position papers. This could also be done concerning some of the Press Releases.
* We must be realistic but also responsible (when we make a commitment among ourselves, even if difficult, we need to accomplish it), referring to NRP questionnaires. Capacity building is one of the solutions to help each other.
* A digital tool that can answer a lot of our info-flow problems is the yammer community (proposed by Sonja) together with dropbox etc.
* Policy briefing is still a good reference document.
* Explanatory policy issues in videos for people starting to get involved could help bridge the gap between experienced and new members. Open a storage place where all these video tools can be used. It can also be a base for capacity building. E-learning systems like mooder is another example. Some of these require contributions and resources, even though they might seem resource-free.
1. **On improving capacity building and training on national and EU level**

Members strongly supported the creation of this development group to support national networks, implementation of the MASS, capacity building and enlargement of the network.

* It is a group of the Exco – made up of membership of some members of the Exco (the Bureau will draft criteria for this). The group will be independent from Exco - sometimes extra days for this group’s meetings.
* More time for dialogue, more time for strategic support for capacity building; going a bit back to the past for studying the needs for training and delivering it in a more structured way (believe that we are missing a more strategic approach to training).
* This can be a place for mutual learning and an exchange between us.
* The group will not be responsible for everything in member development (some areas to go to an enlarged Bureau – helping networks to solve and overcome problems, from conflicts to problems of funding or representatives). For example, a meeting hosted by a NN is sometimes a push for that network to be more active, more representative, credible etc. EAPN meetings could also be organised in countries where a NN has challenges with NRP promotion). A minister might never receive a network alone but it could open some cooperation door when the Network goes with peers from Europe.

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| 1. **On enlarging the Bureau and giving it a different mandate**

**General remarks*** 15 NNs and bureau was 5; now 31 NNs – 5 bureau; smaller staff also. These are arguments enough to enlarge it.
* For the next Bureau to cope better with the workload, the Exco needs to enlarge it.
* An enlarged Bureau would be more representative of Exco. It’s about functionality and more capacity to do the work better. Stronger Bureau to complement the smaller secretariat – very clear that Bureau needs more division of tasks to work better.

Over 90% of members believe that it is a good idea and it should be done with conditions:* Clear mandate – each Bureau member to have specific function
* Mandate should come from the Exco and final decision with the Exco
* First need was to have more resources/workforce in the Bureau who do everything as volunteers
* Some people call for EOs to be more present in the Bureau. Not necessary to have ringfencing because Statutes already allow it, but we should encourage EOs to run for Bureau in the next round.
* In terms of proportion between NNs and EOs (either 6+1 or 7+2). It could be encouraged as an additional criteria of balance along with gender, geography etc.

**Vote: 15 voted in favour of 7 Bureau members and 9 members voted in favour of 9 members.** Comment from members: Bureau should have informed fully the members on the 7 or 9 members consequences (7 because fewer resources but 9 for how many needed). Bureau felt that at this moment it is better to be careful and vote for a 7-member Bureau, considering the possible resources EAPN will have. The decision can be reviewed if there’s an increase in funding.  |

**Part of the Strategic Discussions covered in a second round of World Café**

1. **Functioning of governing bodies**

There were concerns about current way of having GA, recognizing why we have it and that we voted for it. But members realized that participation of national members must be recognized as something very important. Next year we will have a Strategic Congress with wider participation of members. There will be a new group depending on Exco, two policy task forces trying to improve involvement of members. If GA from the past cannot be kept (financially cannot be done) – we will be looking for different ways to promote participation, mutual learning, exchange between networks.

1. **Capacity Building**

Should take into account regions we live and work in. Language is still sometimes a problem (English but also jargon). World Café raised as a good experience that could be reproduced in Exco and other bodies.

1. **Balance between lobbying and capacity building**

Need capacity building and lobbying, they must go together and we recognize the need to reinforce capacity building. A decision was made on this which should help mainstream it better in every activity we do. National Networks are very different, not only in terms of model but also age, number of members, countries, kinds of governments, organisations and size. All this must be considered when talking about capacity building for lobby at national level. We need a better link between lobbying at EU and national level. This must be more member-driven than secretariat driven. The Member Development Group will think about what kind of training we need and will improve that. Trainings need to be a continuous activity.

1. **Bridging the diversity**

Some people speak about thematic approach and the possibility of mutual learning (through projects can be done, but we should put them as priority).

**5. Broader policy focus than poverty**

It is true that we focus more on Europe 2020, but EAPN is starting to have an impact in member states and need to use that to have impact in other countries. It is a myth that Europe 2020 strategy is Commission driven. EAPN can put efforts to bringing into this strategy its own agenda. When we are against some things in NRPs, we are picking up what people experiencing poverty or our task forces say in their meetings. It can be reinforced, more focused, provide clusters, but cannot say it is not in our interest or not enough.

We should try to shape more the public opinion – we are always targeting politicians and civil servants, but it could be one of our first targets.

We will need to appoint a small group of people from among the Exco to plan the next strategic planning session in November. The Bureau will meet and prepare the setting up of such a group.

Regarding the next Exco in November, Sérgio welcomed the invitation from Spain. The next Exco will therefore take place in Sevilla on the 14th of November. The EXCO will have an opportunity then to do the final co-ordination for the EPAP meeting on 19 November.

Carlos welcomed the Exco members to the next meeting which will be hosted by EAPN Andalucia. The Network turns 20 years and is among one of the long standing active ones. Some members of the Exco will be invited to participate in a national event preceding the November Exco meeting.

The meeting closed at 19:00.