**EXCO Doc N 5.4**

**Proposal to the Executive for setting up a Membership Development Group to lead on the implementation of the MASS and the Training and Capacity Building Work**

*Final version 11/06/2014*

1. **The Bureau recommendation**

Following EAPN evaluation process, the recommendations of the Task Forces in the development field and the Bureau’s own reflection of EAPN members’ engagement with the European network activities, the Bureau recommends to reorganize the development work to better respond to the challenge under Goal 2 of the current Strategic Plan: EAPN is a dynamic, membership driven organization that is recognized as a key civil society actor fighting poverty, social exclusion and inequalities at National and European levels.

**The** ***Bureau believes that membership development needs to remain an even more reinforced priority in the future work to ensure that EAPN’s base engages effectively with the European policy agenda. It recommends to the Executive to reorganize the Membership work in the following way:***

1. ***Set up a Membership Development group under direct responsibility and leadership of the EXCO to lead on EAPN’s implementation of the Membership Assessment and Support System, to coordinate the training and capacity building strategy implementation, and to follow-up the enlargement of the network, based on the recommendations of the Task Force that finished its work*** *(for example engaging members in planning and carrying out training and capacity building seminars, implementing the MASS in at least 2 Networks per year, providing guidance to networks needing support in engaging with European work or to Networks receiving development grants from EAPN Fund, planning induction, providing support to members needing/requesting it etc)****. The bureau proposes that this group is made of 7 democratically elected Exco members who would meet 3 times per year in meetings separate from those of the Executive to allow the Group to advance on its own agenda items. The Group would report to the Exco on the progress made.***
2. ***The Bureau then would be responsible to take up governance and institutional matters and to lead on issues that are of political nature or that strengthen the governance and engagement of members in EAPN*** *(for example: conflict management in Networks needing it, supporting Networks through statutory changes, following closely preparation for membership and engagement of new members, ensuring members fulfill and respect statutory requirements etc). These additional tasks can only be effectively addressed if the Bureau is enlarged.*

*The Executive Committee holds strategic decision-making powers over these matters so both the Membership Development Group and the Bureau should report regularly on progress on the issues they are leading on/involved with. This work will be facilitated because the working group will be made of Exco members.* This proposal reflects a pro-active process that EAPN takes towards membership, empowering the Bureau with some management issues (carrying the responsibility for statutory, political and governance issues in the area of membership development) as explained above, and setting-up a Membership Development Group to lead on the implementation of the MASS and the Training and Capacity Building work. This also clarifies matters and ensures members are pro-actively engaging in with Membership Development.

**Background**

1. **Brief explanation of the problem**

Network development is a continuous process with new files adding up to the agenda but the network development pillar has no reference group anymore. Such matters should have been dealt with by a Subgroup of the Executive but the subgroup did not meet anymore during the last Exco meetings; the subgroup had too big an agenda and very few members who were able to lead on the implementation of the objectives on this area; the bureau assessed that members of the Executive, and EAPN as a whole, benefit more from working together in a big group and it would take the responsibility on leading on some of these issues.

. But, it is crucial to have a membership development reference group with the appropriate information and engagement of the Bureau and the Executive Committee as files continue to add up to the list.

Because there is no such reference group anymore, the burden of dealing with these issues is with the Bureau and fewer members can engage or lead on this work. Considering the big portfolio of responsibilities that the Bureau currently manages, some development matters await decision for a long time or require immediate response and fewer members from the whole Executive (which currently is the reference group on Development matters) are involved or have ownership of what EAPN tries to develop in this field.

Finally, the situation that has risen in several networks over the last couple of years calls for the establishment of a more permanent body that deals with membership issues, with a similar mandate length as the Executive, able to respond promptly, to carry out a thorough analysis and to engage in finding solutions with the respective member. The Bureau proposes to separate the statutory and governance matters from membership development matters. Some of the issues that need more engaged commitment include:

* a more thorough membership application process and an overall membership review of together with the secretariat,
* dealing with conflict management,
* supporting individual networks to work out practical solutions of engaging better with EAPN;
* advancing the capacity building and MASS work in a coherent manner and integrating the learning from the process;
* ensuring members fulfill statutory and membership requirements (annual reports, for example);
* monitoring implementation of Goal 3 of EAPN Strategic Plan – strengthening direct participation of people experiencing poverty in EAPN’s work;
* ensuring the follow-up of the enlargement of the network;
* other matters related to membership, governance and development.

1. **Some of the achievements of the Executive Subgroup on Membership Development and Support under the current Strategic Plan**

Under the current Strategic Plan 2012-2014, the Executive Committee Subgroup on Membership Development and Support is the main reference group on member development and general membership questions. This group has overseen the work of two Task Forces. In particular, the first one developed, for the first time in EAPN, a common general framework for National Networks – MASS, based on four pillars of strong anti-poverty networks; it is overseeing its implementation by Networks nationally and at European level inside EAPN. The second Task Force has been entrusted with the renewal of the EAPN training and capacity building programme, based on the MASS framework. In addition to that, the Subgroup is also following closely support to individual Networks to rebuild, strengthen or reengage more actively with EAPN. Four different examples show this work:

1 – the way EAPN Fund grant has helped EAPN Netherlands rebuild itself (the Subgroup invited Quinta to share the process they have implemented)

2 – the development Task Forces reporting to the Subgroup have developed the Membership Assessment and Support System and a renewed proposal for a Training and Capacity Building Strategy, based on the MASS framework;

3 – support visit to EAPN Romania and proposal to use the MASS to strengthen the network and better engage with European and national policy-making (the Subgroup identified the challenges EAPN Romania faced of engaging better with EAPN Europe and proposed a support visit; EAPN Romania also made a presentation in the following Executive Committee meeting in Serbia)

4 – mediation visit to EAPN Slovenia on an internal conflict (the Subgroup appointed two representatives of EAPN to go, together with the Development Officer, and initiate a mediation process; the Subgroup heard a report and made proposals to the Executive on this matter)

5 – following the enlargement of EAPN (the Subgroup followed updates on work with Latvia, Croatia and other initiatives and shared their own contacts, concerns, advice on what can be done in this area).

The Subgroup has also overseen the capacity building seminars for members in the development area and has clarified the procedure for identifying and supporting Networks that struggle to engage with policy-making at European level.

While this Subgroup is unable to meet, the need for a clear reference group inside EAPN is bigger than ever and development and governance questions cannot be dealt with in a way that informs and engages members.