20th of February 2014/BH2rev

**Bureau Meeting**

**Draft Minutes**

27th and 28th of January 2014

Present: Sérgio, Letizia, Kaert, Olivier, Barbara

Excused: Peter

1. Olivier announced his resignation from Bureau and EXCO. Sérgio expressed great regret on behalf of the Bureau.

**Action points**:

Olivier will inform Sérgio and the Bureau by email about the decision.

Sérgio will inform the EXCO.

**Decision**:

**The next EXCO will need to elect a new interim member of the Bureau to replace Olivier.**

1. Staff request to attend Bureau Meetings

**Decision: Unanimous agreement not to allow staff to attend/ nor to have a staff member other than Barbara representing the staff and staff issues.**

**Action Points**: Barbara to inform staff about the decision

EXCO should be informed about changes in staff participation at EXCO meeting.

1. Staff Promotion

Bureau discussed a proposal to allow for promotion of staff – new titles without increase in salaries.

**Decision**: **Titles can change in the context of the reorganization of the secretariat; Bureau rejected establishing a promotion procedure.**

**Action Point**: Bureau will explain decision to staff at the next Bureau meeting.

1. Staff Handbook/Working Regulation

There was consensus in the Bureau that the working conditions of staff members were excellent and well above those normally found elsewhere. There was suggestion that it may have to do with the “Brussels’ bubble.

**Decision**: **The Bureau agreed to the proposed staff handbook.**

1. External Evaluation

Sérgio presented the proposal by José Manuel Fresno. The Bureau expressed its full support for the choice of evaluator as well as the approach to the evaluation. The Bureau also felt that members needed more time to respond to the questionnaire which will be sent by the evaluator. Given that the evaluation should be linked with the Strategic Congress in 2015, there was still time to postpone a thorough discussion of the process and draft report until the Exco in June.

**Decision**: **Final report will be planned for September 2014**

**EXCO to discuss the draft report in June**

1. Changes to the Budget

Sérgio introduced the item by underlining that decisions needed to be made for the future. Unfortunately, the restructuring in Lisbon and Norway was not enough to accommodate the new realities.

The discussion that followed touched on the need to strengthen links with the Parliament and the importance of the national level to participate in the shaping of the future of EAPN.

Sérgio also pointed out that EAPN filled an important role as an interlocuteur with European institutions, but asked whether the current structure and size of the secretariat corresponded to that role. He said that “it was time to rethink the role of EAPN in the fight against poverty. This was also seconded by Olivier. EAPN is not only an advocacy organization. Actually it is not clear why we decided to use this word instead of lobby – definition we used since the foundation of the network. Calling ourselves “advocacy is reducing our nature and role. Most of our members are service providers. We do not represent them (there are other structures for this) but we represent their interest in the fight against poverty. Advocacy is a tool; lobbying is a tool. It is not an end in itself. We are not only a lobbying organization. We are defending the point of view of people experiencing poverty. We are to represent the voice of people experiencing poverty and propose alternative solutions.

When we see how our national networks present themselves (see, just an example the Irish Network. “EAPN Ireland is a network of anti-poverty groups working to put the eradication of poverty at the top of the EU and Irish agenda through information, training, advocacy and networking”) this becomes more clear.

And we need to be pragmatic and we should go to the EXCO with very clear ideas.

Letizia added that it was necessary to discuss democracy and statutory tools, and that account should be taken of the budgetary restraints, but not be driven by it.

Sérgio proposed to be very clear with members that there was a need to reduce the spread of things. It’s better to have one task force instead of so many; one training session instead of three. There is a need to be creative such as defining the tasks of one task force horizontally.

Letizia added that such changes could be done in a simple way and that there was a need for renewal of leadership, i.e. need to bring younger people on board.

Kaert also said that there was a need to be more connected to the grassroots and access the different knowledge that networks have. We should be focused on being member driven.

Regarding publications, there was consensus that they were mainly useless to members. Rather than more publications, it is more important to develop the website and produce videos, which could have so much more impact.

Kaert said that it was a fact that the same people experiencing poverty are always “on duty” and that should change.

There was also consensus that some real priority issues were not addressed adequately in particular mentioning Lampedusa/where people were dying. It should be clear that EAPN needs to be much more connected to the ground. EAPN Europe should be more “generous” supporting the projects of networks.

**Decisions**: **Bureau to propose to EXCO reduction of activities**

**EAPN/Europe to give support when networks applying for external support**.

1. Update on Policy – Strategic Planning

Sian presented an update on policy context/political realities. She underlined the importance of the mid-term review and the continuation of our work on the European semester/CSRs. She also said that the current work program and Joint Action project presented more work than previously with less staff and less money.

Comments by Bureau:

The Bureau felt that EAPN should be more engaged in social innovation. There should be short position papers, such as on social innovation rather than long, more academic publications. Barbara and Sian pointed out that taking positions on relatively new issues involved a process that could take up a lot of time and energy.

Sérgio said that EAPN had never really taken it up officially and if we do not take position, we will be ignored. It would be good to have this position paper on social inclusion and it would not take more than 3 pages.

**Action Point**: The toolkit on SF should be no more than ten pages; something networks could work with. Tools like these tended to be too late and too complicated, thus their usefulness was rather limited.

The Bureau also said that the EUISG should be less heavy regarding the agenda. The way meetings were managed made it difficult for members to follow. The inputs and outputs should be simplified. Social innovation should be one of the issues that the EUISG should take up.

Sian said that this needed to be taken up by the Steering Group of the EUISG which leads the process.

Sérgio said that looking at the revised work program, the three things that Members are really interested in - Investing in Children – Homelessness – Social Innovation – were cut.

Bureau Members also questioned the living wage campaign and wanted to understand how that linked to EAPN activities on minimum income and decent wage.

**Decision on Task forces:**

**No new task forces and only 6 meetings this year of the existing ones.**

**Decision on Joint Alliance:**

**The Bureau said that participation in the alliance by national networks should be part of an open process of application so that not only the usual suspect would receive funding. The bottom line should be that where there is already a platform, they should not be applying.**

Sian pointed out that it would be difficult applying these criteria because of the co-funding issue.

Regarding EXCO-EUISG meeting:

The EXCO last time was very clear that there was no conflict between the EXCO and the EUISG. **The next EXCO with SG of the EUISG would meet after March.**

Regarding the GA:

Letizia announced that the next GA could take place in Italy pending final checks on budget.

Regarding the EUISG:

One of the EUISG should be held in the Czech Republic pending talks with Karel.

Regarding the EXCO, Letizia proposed to structure the next day’s discussion according to the agenda items that needed to be discussed at the EXCO:

* Work plan/Budget
* Statutory changes needed
* External Evaluation
* Fundraising

**It was also proposed and agreed that those items which had not been discussed, would be put on the agenda of a skype meeting to be held on Thursday, 30th of January at 17:00 pending Peter’s availability.**

1. FINANCES 2013

Philippe reported:

* Budget on meetings – people are still sending their reimbursement claims;
* The great underspent is linked to contracts which have still not been finalized due to missing information or delays by national networks.
* Next Year’s contracts will generate less co-funding; also less because no translation because we will not publish the MAG anymore.
* Reimbursements are getting better

1. Preparations for the PEP Meeting

Fintan presented the proposal for the PEP meeting 2014

He was in touch with the Greek presidency which said that it could give political support, but not financial.

Fintan explained that the meetings with the Commission clarified that there were 150,000 available, but that could not pay for a co-ordinator. Problems could also arise because there would be no interpretation/translation budget.

It was suggested that the number of participants could be reduced. Sérgio explained that the reduction of number of people is not only a matter of money but also a strategic one (no interpretation is better to have less participants); the participants are representing vast numbers of people participating in this movement at the national level.

Fintan explained that in the past, the key to participation had been 4/5/6 delegates depending on the size of the country.

Letizia suggested that the number of delegates should be the same for all countries. She also said that the Italian presidency should be involved.

It was also suggested that delegations could invite a journalist to come along in order to increase the visibility of the event and make the link to the national level.

Fintan also explained that there would be a substantial amount of coordination to be done; at least 50 days (or a couple of months) of full-time work, which would amount to about 20,000 Euro.

**Decision: Funding for the PEP must include funding for a co-ordinator; if necessary, reduce the number of paid participants; perhaps one journalist per country could be paid to come over to give more visibility.**

**Dates should be end of May or beginning of June.**

The discussion on the structural funds took the Bureau to a discussion about the nature of the meetings and the framework in which they take place. Sérgio was clear that they should also serve to be coherent with other EAPN demands (national and European strategies to fight poverty to support the use of the 20% ESF resources).

The Bureau expressed doubt whether the theme of SF was appropriate. Sérgio reiterated that EAPN must think strategically. The SF/ESF projects have not really changed the reality on the ground. There is no strategy behind it. He also referred to the Portuguese experience and said that a whole generation grew up with the SF, but that there had not been a real change on account of it. Letizia added that it was illusionary to think that the SF had an impact.

There was also a discussion about who would be participating in the European PeP meeting. Fintan outlined that there must be a difference between the PEP meeting and an EAPN meeting. The PEP meeting should cater to people who are starting to connect and want to become activists.

Sérgio responded that that engagement happens at national level where EAPN works and does not need to be replicated at European level. This is all about empowering people at national level, Sérgio added.

The Bureau supported the general approach to organizing the meeting, which Fintan had outlined in his background note.

1. EAPN Fund

Sérgio questioned the procedure regarding the request by Hungary to turn the loan into project funding. He also challenged the process that was applied to fund the Greek project. They did not send any indicators on how to assess the project. There was no process to monitor the Greek project now and how it could reach its targets. ALSO SOME MORE EXPLANATION SHOULD BE GIVEN such as what indicators they would use to measure their performance. There is an urgent need to give an answer to those who get the funding.

Sérgio: No criteria – no fund – It is better to stop the process if we continue without criteria

Estonia is waiting for its money. First of all for a decision! Kaert said that she did not know what to tell her networks.

**Decision: Bureau recommends the approval of the funding for Estonia**

Action Point: Fintan to follow up as quickly as possible.

Sérgio said that he was not happy with the process and that we did not know how and what to do with the Fund. Letizia said that we have to work on how to make the procedure more functional and transparent.

It was pointed out that the criteria for funding had to be clear and that the procedure needed to be followed. Sérgio said that there was too little control over it all.

Fintan explained that the Hungarian network received a loan which they are going to pay back, but they had come now back and wanted to draw from the fund to bridge the financial crisis.

Letizia said that the Hungarian network first had to pay back its debt and then apply for project funding.

Skype Meeting: Bureau of EAPN: 30th of January: 17:00 – 19:00

Present: Sérgio, Letizia, Peter, Kaert, Barbara

Sérgio said that he wanted to send some changes to the draft minutes that Barbara had sent to the Members of the Bureau.

There was a short exchange on how and when to communicate the decisions on the cuts and in particular on the cuts in translation and interpretation. **There was general agreement that it was too soon to report on this; information should go out as soon as there was final clarity on our contract with the Commission**.

The Bureau discussed the pending issue of meeting with the staff. Peter raised the question on how to bring people with us and what steps would we need to take. There was an exchange about the relationship between Bureau and secretariat; it was pointed out that the Bureau was very appreciative of the efforts and work of the staff, but that the staff was not membership of EAPN.

**Decisions:**

**Barbara re-organise the staff and develop a new organigram**

**Speak with staff individually and report back at the next Bureau meeting.**

There were worries expressed that there might be a need for an emergency intervention. Bureau Members said that there was also a need to inform the EXCO about the situation. It was also agreed that the issue had to be handled with care.

Regarding he attendance of the staff at the next EXCO meeting, it **was agreed that it should follow the needs on the basis of the agenda. It was also agreed:**

**Decision: to take as few staff members as possible since there were no subgroups anymore.**

**Barbara will decide who she wants to take with her.**

The Bureau also discussed the possibility of an emergency meeting before the EXCO.

**Decision: It was decided to meet on the 3rd of March in Brussels and stay until the 4th of March to attend and chair the launch of EAPN’s election campaign.**

In relation to the European election campaign, Barbara asked the Bureau members to record election messages with their phones and send them to the secretariat.

**Decision: Pending budgetary means, the secretariat should aim to produce an election campaign video.**

**On the membership survey, it was decided to send an email to our national members to ask them how many members, individual and networks they have; in any case, we must avoid to send them a complicated questionnaire.**

**The same question about membership should be put to the EOs at their next meeting.**

Sérgio informed the Bureau that the Spanish network was willing to host an EXCO in November and that the preliminary dates were either the 3rd or the 9th of November. Sérgio will liaise with the Spanish network for final confirmation.