**EXCO Doc N 5.3**

**EAPN Training and Capacity Building Strategy**

**Proposal by the Training and Capacity Building Task Force**

*Draft 2: TB 04/06/2014*

This draft proposal for a renewed Training and Capacity Building Strategy was developed by the Task Force with the same name, appointed by the EAPN Executive Committee. The Task Force has finished its work and is submitting the proposal for the Executive Committee consideration. The Bureau recommends to the Executive to establish a Membership Development Group which will take the MASS and this document as their basis and will lead on the implementation of this process (see separate document proposal).

**Task Force mandate from the Executive and working methods**

Appointed by the Executive Committee in 2013 to renew the EAPN Training and Capacity Building Strategy, based on the Membership Assessment and Support System, the Task Force met in a reduced composition (two members withdrew in process) and organised its work in the following way:

1. Mapping the member capacity building needs and expertise through a questionnaire to members looking at strengths and weaknesses they identify along the MASS framework in June-December 2013
2. Organising a capacity building meeting on the MASS in December 2013. Consulting members attending the MASS seminar on the training strategy.
3. Drafting a training and capacity building strategy to be submitted to the Executive Committee.

While the initial ambition of the Task Force was quite big and involved setting up a reference group of experts and trainers from EAPN membership, the budget cuts led the Task Force to work towards a realistic and implementable Action Plan for the coming years.

14 National Networks completed the questionnaire on training and capacity building needs and expertise. At the recommendations of the Executive Committee, EAPN Iceland has volunteer to be the first network to undergo the MASS peer assessment with representatives from EAPN Estonia, UK (Scotland) and Belgium.

In addition, 22 participants joined the capacity building seminar on the MASS, organized in December 2013. The seminar was focused on understanding the details of the MASS framework and on adopting it as the common development framework for all National Networks. The seminar drew on the strengths of members in different areas and included seven National Network presentations under the different pillars of the MASS. Among the key conclusions of the seminar there was unanimous agreement that implementing the MASS guidelines would strengthen the EAPN National Networks and it would contribute to the mutual learning in EAPN. Furthermore, members valued highly the opportunity to understand the way other members are structured or how they are approaching their work in policy-making, participation, development or internal governance. Finally, participants in the seminar asked for more and easier communication on the four pillars of strong anti-poverty Networks, making the MASS a living tool.

The Executive Committee (Subgroup on Membership Development and Support) has been informed of the progress on this area, being the group primarily responsible for member development. The Task Force on renewing the EAPN Training and Capacity Building Strategy is bringing the results of these processes into a proposed renewed training strategy of EAPN.

**Membership Assessment and Support System – common framework for development, mutual learning and growth**

In 2011, EAPN developed the Membership Assessment and Support System as a peer-led learning and development framework for National Networks, based on four pillars of strong anti poverty networks:

1. Ability to influence governments for better policies: advocacy, lobbying and policy-making linked to European level developments
2. Participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in internal and external workings of the National Networks
3. Development and growth of networks (including capacity building and a growth plan)
4. Good governance and strong internal democracy (including management, strategic planning, governance and funding).

The Executive Committee decided to take the MASS as the basis for the development framework of EAPN National Networks and to renew the training and capacity building strategy in line with the document. The MASS would be implemented through a peer learning and support system, where representatives of peer Networks meet and discuss outcomes of an internal assessment process and together they draft a development and follow-up action plan.

EAPN Networks are already implementing the MASS in their work and all their actions strengthen them as national actors. They actively engage with national and EU policy-making processes, they raise awareness on causes and consequences of poverty, fight stigma and discrimination of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, foster direct participation, mobilise NGOs and other actors for a more social and democratic Europe. Members also submit annual reports and make contributions to EAPN work in different areas. The MASS document reflects all member activity in a framework and offers a list of guiding questions to help members look forward and have a better vision of a mid to long-term development perspective. This process also aims to build better knowledge and understanding of the work of the different Networks inside EAPN and to identify and disseminate the good practices they implement, building on the diversity of structures and approaches that membership of EAPN reflects.

**Messages from member consultation**

Despite the challenging environment, members carry out a vast amount of work and continue to engage with governments on anti poverty policies. This is evident from the annual reports and from answers to the questionnaire, particularly when members share which activity/action they consider their best during the last year.

Overall the networks have similar priorities and carry out similar types of actions, however, they deliver on their goals in different ways, much depending on the resources they can draw on and on the capacity of their members to engage with European policy-making processes.

What some members face as difficulties, others have tried and found solutions to in their countries. An important task of the renewed training and capacity building strategy is to find the space in EAPN where these solutions can be shared, particularly in the context of reduced spaces dedicated to this. For example, the EAPN Learning Forum or Induction Seminars are no longer in the work programme of EAPN and such activities depend on the success of EAPN’s fundraising work.

Some needs are recurrent and constantly raised by members – particularly on questions of understanding the current EU Strategy and the policy-making mechanisms, how to initiate direct participation in the network or how to implement a network’s own capacity building strategy.

A strong message is to work on a common definition of what is a good practice and share more of those as a way of telling the Network stories and giving solutions. Annual reports are a starting point for that and the Executive Committee should lead on further developing this initiative.

The pillar of network development and growth is one where few networks feel strong in and that they would like to further develop. Some of the challenges members face are how to make European policy attractive/interesting for their members, how get society, and sometimes member NGOs, to recognize advantages and strengths of networking and how to ensure direct participation is a real process inside the network and in policy-making processes.

**Networks indicating the Pillar they feel strongest in and the ones they need to focus on most (14 Networks responded to the Questionnaire and some did not respond to this question)**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pillar** | **Pillar 1 – influencing policy** | **Pillar 2 – participation of people experiencing poverty** | **Pillar 3 – Network development and growth** | **Pillar 4 – Internal Democracy and good governance** |
| **Networks indicating pillar they feel strongest in** | Iceland  Austria  Norway  Germany  Spain  Serbia | Czech Republic  Malta  Iceland  Sweden | Portugal | Poland  Finland  Spain  Estonia |
| **Network indicating pillar they need to work on most** | Cz Rep  Malta  Estonia | Cz Rep  Poland  Finland  Germany  Spain | Iceland  Austria  Sweden  Norway  Germany  Serbia | Portugal  Cz Rep  Iceland |

**The current approach to capacity building work in EAPN**

Capacity building is a mainstreamed element of much of the European level work carried out by EAPN in all the areas and through the different statutory structures (General Assembly and Executive Committee) as well as working structures (such as the EU Inclusion Strategies Group, Task Forces, seminars, conferences) and project work (EU Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty, EMIN, Drivers). Two of the three EU ISG meetings a year have capacity building elements and all work aims to build on the successes members have in engaging with Europe 2020 agenda. Task Forces have among their objectives to develop tools or build capacity of members on the topics they focus (for example the work of the Structural Funds Task Force or the one on Civil Dialogue under Europe 2020).

In addition, project and fundraising work is built with active engagement of members and with some members leading work packages (for example the Minimum Income Network Project, the grants from EAPN Fund to Networks). The communication work, carried out by the Task Force and coordinated by the Executive subgroup responsible has also organised a training on using ICTs, facilitated by members with experience on the topic. Campaigning work is helping galvanize all the discussions around better use of social media to bring messages forward. EAPN members have been actively involved in the EP elections campaign through twitter, facebook and a dedicated blog.

Once a year, EAPN organizes a capacity building seminar with focus on network development (in the past such seminars looked at strengthening participation of people experiencing poverty, on building financial sustainability and management capacity of the networks or at evaluation and strategic planning). The EAPN Learning Forum, Induction seminars or the Seminar on understanding and using the MASS all aimed to build a strong activist base and to facilitate member engagement with the work of EAPN Europe.

As lives of Networks go through ups and downs, EAPN has developed a mechanism of identifying early which Network struggles to engage with European work and providing necessary support through visits, bilateral communication, or training. Such work is vital in EAPN where members vary greatly in size, resources and ability to engage actively with the European agenda.

The 2013 MASS seminar highlighted the value of focusing on hearing how networks are structured, how they engage different types of activists, academics, NGOs, other types of actors and how they build and use their resources and knowledge to achieve their objectives at national and European level.

The EAPN Learning Forum co-organised with Dignity International and EAPN Estonia was an opportunity to bring together EAPN activists with different years of experience and engagement and to revisit the anti poverty work at local level in the organisations and communities that people are spending most of their time with. 20 workshops were entirely organised by members on very different topics and it was all-in-all a very dynamic event. Some of those participants engaged better with European-level work following the Learning Forum. Such activities are particularly empowering for activists with direct experience of poverty who have been with the EAPN members for a long time and who ask for more opportunities to engage with the European level work.

Finally, at the insistence of the Bureau, 23 National Networks submitted their annual reports for 2012, the highest number in recent years. Members had an opportunity to share their achievements and challenges in workshops based on these reports, organised at the General Assembly in 2013. Building further on this positive outcome and making the MASS a basis for membership development, the Bureau has invited members to submit their 2013 Annual Reports following the four pillars of strong anti poverty networks (advocacy/lobbying and policymaking, participation of people experiencing poverty, development and internal governance).

**Task Force recommendations – a concrete action plan for the next two years and bigger rethinking for the future**

In light of the new funding reality, and following the guidelines from the Executive Committee based on the MASS, the Task Force has analysed the results of member input and proposes concrete actions in the foreseeable future that can be integrated in the EAPN Strategic Plan and Work Programme. Despite the initial ambition, the Task Force decided to propose a more concrete action plan which can be the foundation for a bigger review in the future. All the information provided made it very clear that if Networks do not carry out national capacity building with their own members informing, explaining and actively engaging members and activists with direct experience of poverty towards the objectives of EAPN, a European network strategy would not make a big difference.

National level coordination, clear internal communication, engagement of activists and information at all times about the European work of EAPN is crucial to building a strong activist base and to engaging them in fighting for a social Europe free of poverty, inequalities and social exclusion. The particular work on direct participation of people experiencing poverty, the work of building and strengthening visibility, establishing a media presence and being in dialogue with society through formal and informal communication channels are all areas that Networks need to strengthen. For a strong impact, networks also need to have in place systems that allow for maximum use at national level of all the joint work carried out at European level.

All the European EAPN statutory and working groups develop capacity building materials (toolkits, position papers, other types of publications) which are a great source of Network strengthening. Networks can benefit from them by translating, disseminating and using them in their national advocacy and lobbying work, discussing them with people with direct experience of poverty and promoting them towards public authorities at different levels. In other words, a lot of information flows continuously and without a good system in place, Networks find themselves struggling to cope with it. The MASS is the reference framework that allows Networks to have a clear picture of how they are standing on each of the four pillars and what they need to do to strengthen them.

Implementation of the MASS will create deeper knowledge about our members and will help disseminate this knowledge through peer assessment and learning meetings as well as through reports, presentations in the Executive Committee and through annual reports.

The opportunities are there and we need to consolidate them for stronger national networks. Based on this, the Task Force proposes:

**At national level, National Networks should:**

* Implement the MASS, identifying strengths and weaknesses, drawing up development plans (according to the Standing Orders requirements) and reporting on progress in the Annual Reports on each of the four pillars (including advocacy and policy-making, participation of people experiencing poverty, development and growth and governance and internal democracy).
* Organise at least one induction seminar for new members in their countries (drawing on EAPN Europe materials and, where necessary, with support from EAPN Secretariat).
* Aim to create action groups around their representatives in the Executive or on EUISG as both these groups are pivotal to good engagement and motivation for change. They should also strengthen their communication channels to ensure it reaches out to the bases of the membership.
* Build a pool of persons/experts who can speak on the link between national and EU level policy developments.
* Build a pool of activists with direct experience of poverty who can champion direct participation work internally and externally (use the EAPN Strategy on Participation – Sharing the Power, Building the Ownership and other tools).

**European-level proposals**

At European level, proposals fall into two categories: a) face-to-face capacity building and support, and b) using elearning tools. The proposals for face-to-face capacity building consolidate the current practice in EAPN of mainstreaming this work and structure them in the framework of the MASS. In addition, given the resource reality and considering other ways of providing the support that members need, the Task Force proposes introducing elearning tools. Many EAPN national Networks and European organisations are already actively using the opportunities the Internet and web-based tools give for e-learning. EAPN has strengthened the use of such tools for meetings and developing documents. There is a big potential in using it also for learning and transfer of knowledge, since they are flexible, cost-effective and useful in achieving certain goals.

1. **Face-to-face capacity building and support:**

* Continue mainstreaming capacity building in all the statutory and working meetings of EAPN as well as in the communication and project work, as the current practice is.
* Develop a more pro-active role of the secretariat in capacity building (for example, the development officer can work directly with a Network to build and implement tailor-made capacity building seminars in National context. Up to three such seminars could be carried out per year).
* Continue building knowledge about National Networks through presentations and member-developed materials as a reference point on how members are structured and function.
* Continue organizing in-depth Support and Accompaniment work with at least 2 Networks per year, based on the MASS.
* Build a common definition of good practice to highlight member achievements and tell the organisation’s story in a positive way. The Task Force proposes identifying some guiding criteria such as describing the main experience, the learning points and the transferability. These can further be strengthened through the work on the EAPN Award.
* Organise a biennial School on Anti Poverty Work as a space for building the base, drawing inspiration and learning from the daily work of anti poverty organisations.
* Organise at least one development seminar per year based on Member Annual Reports and following the framework of the four pillars of strong anti poverty networks.

1. **Introducing elearning tools in the work of EAPN:**

* Trial webinars on core issues of EAPN that NNs are working with. For example, in follow-up to the results of the Task Force on Structural Funds, EAPN could plan a series of short webinars on specific aspects of the toolkit they have developed (e.g. Building a successful relation with managing authorities…). These can be facilitated by members directly or by the secretariat.
* Record the knowledge that EAPN has for induction and develop training and capacity building modules for elearning that members or EAPN Europe can draw on.
* Develop elearning opportunities to facilitate direct participation of activists with direct experience of poverty in the internal and external workings of EAPN.
* Establish a pool of experts and resource persons for other members to refer to on topics they might want to organise activities.

**Implementation proposals**

EAPN Europe should set up a group responsible for member development to ensure members are actively leading the implementation, evaluation and adapting the Strategy to use the resources available. The Bureau has already received a proposal for a Membership Advisory Group and it will discuss the concrete terms of reference for the Group. The main body responsible for membership development remains the Executive Committee so whatever the implementation mechanism, an annual report on the implementation of the Strategy should be made to the Executive Committee.

Activities that could be organised in 2014 under the renewed Training and Capacity Building Strategy:

* 2 Networks undergo the MASS process – EAPN Spain and EAPN Portugal. Their learning should be brought to the network development seminar.
* Network development seminar on implementing the MASS, based on Network Annual Reports. Members of the Training and Capacity Building Task Force have expressed willingness to contribute to preparing and running the seminar.
* Trialing one webinar (topic and time to be defined from the current work programme, not to create additional work but to make better use of the outcomes of EAPN’s work).
* Setting up a Membership Development Advisory Group (a proposal has been submitted to the Bureau).
* Trial preparation and recording of the first induction training module (possibly test it with new members).
* Begin seeking funds for the School on Anti Poverty Work 2015.
* Present the proposal to the Executive Committee, in the framework of a wider presentation of membership development work.