Membership Development Group Skype meeting

18 September 2015

Draft minutes

1. Attending: Sergio Aires, Tess Murphy, Luigi Leonori, Kamila Plowiec

Apologies: Jasmina Krunic, Vilborg Oddsdottir (request to leave the MDG group as she took on a new role as member of the Bureau), Barbara Helfferich (attending a conference in the NL)

1. Approval of the agenda and agreeing on who was going to chair the meeting. Sergio Aires chaired the meeting. The topics proposed for discussion for the meeting were related to the activities foreseen in the work plan 2015 in the development area and how they were going to be implemented given the budget constraints faced by the network in 2015.
2. **Visits to National Networks**

In 2015, two requests for support visits were received – one from EAPN France and one from EAPN Netherlands.

1. The French Network approached EAPN several times with questions about EAPN’s finances, the strategic planning process, working language of EAPN. A meeting was arranged between EAPN France and members of the secretariat (director and development officer), with certain difficulties, for the 3rd of June. In the end the meeting was only attended by Barbara on behalf of the secretariat. The meeting with Barbara was not organized as a self - standing meeting but within the annual meeting of EAPN France and this made the communication and exchanges difficult. Barbara raised some questions about EAPN France’s participation in EAPN Europe and waiting for answers to these questions.

* Agreement among members of the MDG that they would like to better understand the issues at stake and to understand how the French network sees its participation in EAPN Europe, the expectations they have and how they see fulfilling their role as member of the network.
* Decision: The members of the MDG would like to set up an informal meeting with representatives of the French network during the ExCo in Brussels in October. Magda to contact Jeanne Dietrich and establish an informal meeting between members of the MDG – Sergio Aires and Luigi Leonori, members of the secretariat – Barbara Helfferich Magda Tancau and Jeanne Dietrich.
* Action taken already: Jeanne Dietrich has been in contact with Barbara Helfferich, raising questions about the working language of the Ex Co and other issues on which EAPN France wanted to have an answer before coming to the ExCo. Barbara phoned them to answer questions and clarify some issues and told them about the proposal of the MDG. Representatives of EAPN France are interested to meet the MDG members and Magda is to follow up with an e-mail.

1. Visit to the Dutch Network – difficult to plan the visit due to budget constraints as it has not been clear if there are enough resources in the budget to make the visit. The Dutch network has been going through a long period of transformations triggered by lack of resources and changes in membership. Thus in 2012 they have asked for financial support from the Development Fund.

* Members of the development group pointed at the fact that they would like to have a better understanding of the problems and challenges the Dutch network is facing and more important what kind of support the Dutch network wants to have from EAPN.
* We should have more information on the membership of the Dutch network – what members are now part of the network, do they want to attract new members, what kind of new members they would like to attract.
* In our attempt to support the network we should be guided by the MASS, the visits to networks should be structured around the MASS pillars.
* Decision: A support visit to EAPN Netherlands was planned in the work programme for 2015 and it should be carried out by the end of year. It was suggested that the visit should be done by a member of the secretariat – i.e. the development officer, with the aim of better understanding the problems the network is facing and consequently the support they would like to receive from EAPN, to overcome these problems. However, before undertaking the visit, it is important to try and arrange an informal meeting with Quinta Ansem – the ExCo member. The meeting will be led Tess on behalf of the membership group and Magda from the secretariat.

1. Visit to EAPN Greece – it was decided during the previous MDG meeting, on February 27th 2015, that Barbara would contact the Greek network to find out more about how they are developing. No contact was made with the Greek network before the new development officer arrived or after and the visit was put on hold because of the uncertainty about the budget.
   * We are still missing info about how has the Greek network been developing, we need to receive the report accounting for how the money was spent. Reporting is not an end in itself and is not sent to simply comply with a formal rule, it is more than that, a report is an opportunity for the national network to reflect on both the past and future; it is also a very useful source of information about national networks containing information about how the money was spent but also about future perspectives.
   * Decision: we need to receive the report containing info on how the money was used. Barbara and Sergio to send a letter on behalf of the bureau to the Greek network. Magda liaises with Fintan for the preparation of the letter. Also, a meeting with the current member of the ExCo – Olga and the former member of the ExCo – Maria should be set up during the ExCo meeting.
2. Enlargement visit to Slovenia: no new elements since the last MDG meeting on February 27th. The information about contacts in Slovenia interested in creating a national network and joining EAPN was passed on to the new development officer. However, as for the other visits there has been uncertainty about having the needed resources to travel to Slovenia and meet interested NGOs.
   * The conclusion of the discussion held in the MDG meeting was that the contact with the Slovenian NGO who showed interest in setting up a national network and becoming member of EAPN should be carried on by e-mail. No visit will be made by the end of the year and procedures should be followed – for example, a visit should only be made if several NGOs are attending the meeting. Magda will follow up on the contact had until now with Slovenian NGO.
3. MASS visits – during the last MDG meeting in February it was decided that the opportunity for MASS visits should be offered to the Latvian and Lithuanian networks. Between the last meeting of the MDG and the current meeting no contact was made with any of the networks about the MASS visits. One of the reasons was also related to the uncertainty about the budget, especially since MASS visits should be carried out by members of the secretariat together with representatives of other national networks – peers. As financial resources are still uncertain, Tess suggested to use the opportunity created by the gender conference which will be organized in Vilnius in November by EIGE. The conference will be attended on behalf of EAPN by Barbara, Tess – EAPN Ireland and Graciela – EAPN Spain and attendance costs are covered by EIGE. Therefore TESS suggested to organize a meeting with EAPN Lithuania on the side of the conference.
   * Decision: Try to organize a MASS meeting on the side of the conference. Magda is to check the idea with Barbara and get in touch with EAPN Lithuania.
   * Action taken already: Magda checked with Barbara and is a good idea, Barbara sent her more info about the conference which is to take place on the 18th of November. Magda will in the coming days contact Graciela and a representative of EAPN Lithuania.
   * **As a final conclusion of the discussion it was decided to put on the ExCo agenda the MASS.**
4. **Mapping Exercise**

* Context – it came out of the need of having more specific information about national networks. Fintan prepared a template as agreed during the MDG meeting, on February 27th, and sent it to the members of the group. As there was disagreement among the members of the MDG on what kind of info the template should gather, how many questions, how complex the questions should be, etc. the template could not be finalized and sent to members.
* Decision: the template needs to be simplified and needs to collect info on the administrative and organizational capacity of networks (do they have an office, do they have a secretariat, do they receive funding), on the problems they are facing and on their training and capacity building needs. We should also look into easy and simple to use online tools, like survey monkey.
* Suggestion: setting up a closed Facebook group for NNs where they can post information on projects they work on and activities and events they organize. This would be an informal network of more active members. It would help getting a sense of national members who are more active.
* Action to take: adapt the template to fit to the survey monkey.

1. **Capacity building**

2 capacity building trainings were planned for 2015 – one initial and one advanced capacity building training – and the initial capacity building training was organized in June. Members of the MDG reported that the feedback they received from participants representing their network was good, that they enjoyed it and appreciated it.

* We should use the mapping exercise/survey monkey to find out the priorities for capacity building.
* If the first capacity building was an initial/basic one and designed for people who were less familiar with EAPN, especially the European dimension of the network, the second capacity building training is designed for experts on specific issues and should be oriented towards the EUISG and building up the capacity of members to do policy advocacy work.
* Decision: explore the possibility of organizing an online forum meant to become a space for exchanging experiences and practices. It was suggested to organize an online forum on the issue of refugees before the end of the year. Basic info about the issue should be provided and members would be invited to participate and contribute. The exchange would be structured around questions like: are our NN’s and EO’s involved in this process at the national level? At least some of their members are directly involved in the issue? What kinds of actions are being promoted to prepare the arrival of the refugees? What can we exchange in terms of good practices? What can we learn from each other (mutual learning)? How are we including this topic in our national agendas in the framework of the fight against poverty and social exclusion? What kind of actions could we recommend to EAPN Europe?

1. **Membership requests**

Discussion about the two membership requests on behalf of the Italian organisations: Saint Egidio and Don Bosco. Saint Egidio send a letter of intent, their annual report and statute but not a standard application form. Barbara attended a meeting with representatives of Saint Egidio and has more information about the discussion that took place during the meeting. As they did not submit a formal application yet, they cannot be invited to meet the ExCo yet. When their application is being processed we need to take into account the new criteria set for EOs in the standing orders.

Decision: As they are both Italian organisations, it would be better to check again with our Italian member. Check with Vito about the position of EAPN Italy regarding the two organisations with Italian origins asking to join EAPN.

1. **EAPN Development Fund – input from** **Fintan**

The MDG has the mandate to deal with the grants to National Networks. The note on criteria and procedures for the Grants for National Networks that was used this year will be sent together with the minutes. This should be reviewed and revised if necessary by the MDG, before we send a new call early in 2016.

Regarding a letter to the Greek Network because of the continuous delays in receiving their report, it would be perhaps better to send the letter from the Membership Development Group, as the group has some responsibilities for the Network Grants and not from the Bureau. The real responsible for this is the Management Committee of the EAPN Fund. The letter should be sent to Katecba Poutou (who signed the grant agreement and was chair of the Greek Network - I am not sure if she still is) and to Maria with Olga, the new ExCo member in copy.