



BELGIAN ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK | BAPN non-profit organisation

Annual Report 2013 – based on MASS

very summary & non-exhaustive report

INFLUENCING NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS FOR BETTER POLICIES

The Belgian Anti-Poverty Network (BAPN) works on national and European policies with regard to social justice and fight against poverty and social exclusion.

The Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU2020

The Belgian *alter ego* of the European Platform against Poverty (EPAP) meets four times a year. The Belgian Platform gathers different organisations, civil society actors and public authorities (at federal and regional levels). BAPN plays an important part within the Belgian Platform as it guarantees and fosters the direct participation of people experiencing poverty at these meetings which are thoroughly prepared beforehand. The Belgian Platform acts as an advisory organ to the federal government and is managed by the public federal administration Social Integration. Many recommendations are formulated by the participants and the Platform hands them over to the government. Yet, the Platform's recommendations are hardly ever followed.

Contact with government

Concerning European policies, BAPN regularly lobbies the federal government putting forward its recommendations.

BAPN had contacts with the cabinet of the Prime Minister with regard to the EU2020 poverty-reduction target and to minimum income schemes.

Besides, BAPN formulated several advices on different themes (child poverty, homelessness, minimum income, etc.) to the federal Secretary of State for the Fight against Poverty.

In general, these lobby actions did not have any impact on the policies being led by the federal government.

The contacts with other government members (besides secretary of state for fight against poverty and prime minister) have to be established.

Contact with administration

BAPN has regular and rather good contact with the federal administration Social Integration and Fight against Poverty.

Support Committee BAPN-Government-Administration

Within the scope of BAPN's funding by the federal government, a Support Committee has been established that meets four times a year and resembles BAPN, the cabinet of the secretary of state for the fight against poverty and the federal administration fight against poverty. Major topics BAPN is working on as well as policy items are discussed in these meetings.

All advocacy and lobby actions were put on our website and/or electronic news flash.

PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WORKINGS OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK

Participation of people experiencing poverty is the governing principle of the working of BAPN, be it within the scope of advisory work, actions, sensitizing activities, dialogues... All this requires a preparation work. Before the very formulation of policy recommendations, intensive discussions and consultation is needed. All this takes a lot of time but we think that this is an indispensable working method as it is crucial to involve people experiencing poverty in the policies affecting them.

BAPN central working instruments with regard to participation are the *working group BAPN EU2020* and the *working group Federal Policies*. People experiencing poverty and their grassroots organisations from all over the country are being present in these groups. Besides, workers from the regional anti-poverty networks (members of BAPN) are also regularly present and involved in these meetings.

Smart participation also requires the reinforcement of skills and competences of people experiencing poverty. The ones being activists in our working groups are being trained herein.

Grundtvig: BAPN participated in a European exchange programme (learning partnerships) within the Scope of the European funding programme Grundtvig. Besides Belgium, there were also the partners from France, Portugal and Spain being members. The objective of this two-year long exchange and learning programme focussed on participation of people experiencing poverty and it brought interesting outcome for the participants (mainly people experiencing poverty).

The *European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty* is also an annual event that is prepared by our working group. In the past, it was the board (executive committee) of BAPN who decided on the delegation to the PEP-meeting. Now, it is more democratized. People experiencing poverty do choose themselves who is delegate, but the staff altogether with the group tries to fix this while guaranteeing a certain balance.

Besides, policy meetings have always taken place with direct participation of people experiencing poverty. This can still be improved.

DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF THE NETWORK

BAPN, as a national network, has four member organisations, i.e. the four regional anti-poverty networks (Brussels Platform Armoede, Forum Bruxellois de Lutte contre la Pauvreté, Netwerk tegen Armoede, Réseau Wallon de Lutte contre la Pauvreté).

BAPN was faced, at some time, with the question of accepting more member organisations. Yet, at a board level, the majority wants to stick to the current situation, i.e. only regional anti-poverty being members of the national network. Yet, the regional networks have altogether some 120 member organisations (at regional and grassroots levels). This number is constantly – but not importantly – changing. With some of these affiliated grassroots organisations, BAPN has concrete working contact. Yet, some other grassroots organisations are not reached by BAPN's working.

As a civil society actor, BAPN has rather a restrained visibility within the Belgian political landscape. The visibility is – on the contrary – more important when it comes to the policy field of fight against poverty. The importance of BAPN at national level has to be improved because it is the only national autonomous organisation fostering participation of people experiencing poverty. An official recognition is not existing, even though there are instruments (like the Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU2020) recognizing BAPN as a key actor.

As far as development and growth of BAPN are concerned, we can only observe it within our working groups, but to a very limited extent. Almost always the same people participate in these working groups. Whereas a regional representation and balance is more or less guaranteed in BAPN's working groups, the number of participation does not increase and the diversification of people being active there ongoing but rather weak than strong.

GOVERNANCE AND INTERNAL DEMOCRACY

BAPN's members are, as mentioned above, the regional anti-poverty networks. They make up the general assembly of BAPN, the highest body of BAPN.

Out of the general assembly, a board (executive committee) is elected (twelve members). Representatives of the regional networks are members of the board. There are also two extra-regional-network representatives being member of the board, i.e. people who have no working link anymore with a regional network but who are elected in the board for both their deep expertise in the field of the fight against poverty and their past active involvement in BAPN's activities.

Whereas the General Assembly meets once a year, the board meets around five to six times a year in order to follow up the general actions and evolution of BAPN.

The board also elects members of the Bureau (five members). The board follows more closely financial, staff-related and urgent matters and reports to the board.

In 2013, BAPN was made up of three staff members (coordinator, policy officer and secretariat & administration officer). Compared to 2010 when there were seven staff members, it is an important shrinking of staff that BAPN has undergone.

As far as funding is concerned, BAPN is financially supported by the federal Secretary of State for the Fight against Poverty. She granted, in 2013, 175.000 € to BAPN. Besides, BAPN also received funding within the scope of the EMIN project and within the scope of the Grundtvig-project. A diversification of funding is strongly needed because the core funding still depends on the federal government.