

Pillar 3 – Development and Growth of the Network

Strategy for rebuilding EAPN Netherlands using the solidarity grant from EAPN Fund in 2013

Notes from presentation by Quinta Ansem at the network development seminar 28-29 November 2014

In the last several years, many members of EAPN Netherlands and many organisations generally lost their funding base and disappeared, due to big cuts in public funding of civil society organisations.

The question was, hence, how to open up as a grassroots organisation to professionals, how to build this into the statutes so that:

- Only people experiencing poverty are full members and part of the board;
- Professionals can advise, but not be part of decision-making and cannot be full members.

The Dutch network has redone its statutes with several membership categories now (all this and other info is available on the revamped website www.eapnned.nl).

Because of the crisis, more organisations became interested in being part of EAPN (at the moment there are at least 16 members – all of them are on the website).

The Network regenerated around the few active persons who have been doing everything. So a first step was to discuss thoroughly and redesign the website, using the following principles:

1. It must be time efficient,
2. easy to learn and handle, and
3. can be passed on to others.

The Network also put a lot of effort into social media platforms (on facebook, linked-in...).

The first lesson is that it takes time to get results from such work and one has to be proactive on these social media pages.

In addition, EAPN NL organised some meetings with people experiencing poverty – old and new activists, in several communities and managed to get a project grant to carry out four regional seminars about the communication between social welfare beneficiaries and civil services, administration, policy makers.

The result are two guidebooks:

1. for service providers on making sure they don't have an offensive attitude towards people who have the right to social services or benefits;
2. for beneficiaries to understand their rights and to be courageous and claim them.

This also gave us new contacts.

On 13 December, the delegation that took part in the EU meeting of people experiencing poverty will meet to find new ways for them to be active in the network.

Strengths: there are still people experiencing poverty passionate about the vision, mission and the Network wants them to be in the driver's seat.

Weaknesses – there are not enough financial and other resources for the network to progress quickly.

At the moment, another option that EAPN NL is considering is to organise Webinar trainings for new activists in the Network. It is no longer the case that people experiencing poverty cannot access the internet – very few of them cannot, and so the Network relies a lot on this source.

Another strength is that the dialogue is opening up with public administration. The Network was invited to talk with representatives of 31 municipalities on the link between poverty and debt.