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28th February 2011

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2010

A year has passed since we last met for the Annual General Meeting of the year 2009. At that meeting I mentioned that 2009 was a difficult year as it was the year where we had to build and restructure this forum to what it is today. I had also mentioned that since 2010 was the Year dedicated to combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, it was going to be a very busy year for APF Malta. I also mentioned that we were working on a programme. I am proud to inform you, that despite the fact that we were very much involved within our own organisations, the majority of the executive members of APF did not leave a stone unturned to ensure that what was planned for the Year 2010 actually took place and proved to be a success.

Despite all odds, Malta's launching event of the Year 2010 was the first to be held in Europe and I am proud to say that APF Malta was not only instrumental in ensuring that such an event takes place but was also invited by the National Implementing Body to actively participate. The launching event was held in Valletta on the 3rd February 2010. I felt that I should share the time allocated to my presentation as President of APF Malta with the Chairman of the Task Force which was set up by APF to plan and work on the programme for Year 2010. I am here referring to Mr. Leonid McKay, who is also the Vice President of APF Malta. I would like to take this opportunity to thank heartily this Task Force which had two representatives from Caritas, 2 representatives from the Centre for Faith and Justice, one from Richmond Foundation and myself as President of APF. This group met several times and had it not been for their dedication and commitment, APF Malta would not have been successful in carrying out all the activities during this year. The majority of the members in the Task Force, besides having their own meetings had also to attend the meetings of the ExCo of APF as well as meetings with the different authorities regarding the events that we were encouraged to organise by the EU and EAPN Brussels.

The launching was very well attended and the guest speakers were the President of Malta HE Dr. George Abela, the then Minister for Social Policy Mr. John Dalli as well as a representative from the European Commission. The ten Ambassadors chosen

for the Year 2010 also made their own brief presentations. APF Malta was proud to have Ms. Dolores Gauci, CEO of The Richmond Foundation and who is also an active member of the Executive Committee, chosen as one of the ten Ambassadors. Both Mr. McKay and myself were congratulated for the presentation we gave which presentation also justified the participation of the only NGO within the launch. We were also interviewed after the launch by members of the press who were present.

APF Malta recognised the importance of the EY2010 which had two main objectives being i) raising public awareness on Poverty and Social Exclusion, both actual and relative poverty and ii) that Poverty and Social Exclusion remain in the core of the strategy for Europe 2020.

APF Malta was invited by Caritas Malta to attend to the launching of EY2010 with their campaign on Zero Poverty as well as the General Assembly with the theme being 'The visible face of Poverty in Malta and the church's participation to ease the material deprivation of persons and families in need'

One of the highlights of our events was the Panel Discussion organised during the Focus Week which was celebrated between the 5th and the 11th April 2010. This turned out to be a very successful event with the main protagonists being people experiencing poverty. This was held at the House of Representatives and all MPs were invited to attend. We welcomed the support given by the then Speaker of the House Dr. Louis Galea who immediately consented to our request. We were very pleased and satisfied with the interest shown by all the MPs who attended. Also present were the members of the Committee for Social Affairs. We invited for this event the Director of EAPN Brussels, Mr. Fintan Farrell who gave an emotional presentation on Poverty and Social Exclusion. Another guest speaker was the representative of EAPN Hungary, Mr. Gaza Gosztonyi who spoke about the activities his country had organised during the Hungarian focus week. Also during this event the research work published in a book '*A Report about Poverty in Malta*' was launched. This research was the initiative of Fr. Edgar Busuttil of the Centre of Faith and Justice which is another organisation within APF. The presence of Mrs Kate Gonzi the wife of the Prime Minister was very much appreciated and welcomed. APF managed to find sponsors for the reception that was held at the end of the event.

It is good to note that APF Malta was asked to hold another event where PEP would give their direct and personal testimony. Such was the success of this event. Within that same week Fr. Edgar Busuttil and I were invited to attend an international conference organised by AMASC with the theme '*The Fight Against Poverty*' to which over 300 participants attended. The Key note speaker was Mr. Fintan Farrell, Director of EAPN. This opportunity was offered to us by Ms. Claudia Taylor East, Director of SOS Malta, an organisation within APF Malta.

The 9th EU PEP meeting was held at the European Parliament between the 25th and the 26th June. The national co-ordinator for APF Malta was Mr. Holger Saliba, a

representative from The Richmond Foundation. For this meeting three persons experiencing poverty were selected. I wish to thank Mr. Saliba for all his efforts in preparing the national participants and for the feedback he gave on his return.

I was invited to give presentations at a Round Table organised by the National Implementing Body in October as well as the Closing Event of the Year 2010 that was held in December. I regret to say that while the Round Table was a good event with the participation of the two main Unions as well as a political party, the Closing Event was very poorly attended.

I cannot help but add that APF Malta is not satisfied by the way the sum allocated to Malta was used for the European Year dedicated to Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Almost one year later, and APF Malta was not as yet reimbursed for the only expense made.

I was invited to attend the Round Table that took place in September in Marche-en-Famenne, Belgium. The theme chosen was *'Who cares? - Roadmap for a Recommendation to fight child poverty'* and was organised under the auspices of the Belgian Presidency.

Another Roundtable was held in Brussels in October where Social European Ministers were also invited to participate. APF was this time represented by its Treasurer. Ms. C. Taylor East also took part, representing EAPN Brussels. Both participants had the opportunity to talk about the national situation with the press.

As President of APF I was invited to give a presentation at a National Conference held by The Richmond Foundation in October. This was related to poverty and mental health problems.

I also attended the European closing event of EY2010 which was held in Brussels. There was a striking contrast to how the event was organised when compared to the closing event held in Malta.

APF Malta was represented for two study visits held in Budapest, Hungary and Riga Latvia and actively participated at a Conference held in Brussels in September. This was about *'Ensuring an adequate Minimum Income for All'* with the theme being *'Laying the Foundations for a Fairer Europe'*.

In addition to all the work mentioned above in this exceptionally busy year, the Executive Members attended all the Working Groups meetings on Social Inclusion, Employment and Structural Funds and the Executive meetings of EAPN. We also attended the Annual General Assembly called in June in Cyprus where we also celebrated the twentieth anniversary of EAPN. We also took part at the market place both at the AGA as well as at the Minimum Income Conference and AGORA meeting held in January 2011.

APF Malta was kept busy all through the year. APF was certainly visible and very active with the constant participation on TV and radio programmes as well as interviews given by the media. We also had scripts sent to be used in socio religious TV programmes through which the different modes of poverty and social exclusion was depicted thus raising awareness among the general public. I was shocked by the racist attitudes that exist in our country when on a particular radio programme I made reference to the extreme poverty that undocumented immigrants are experiencing within a particular open centre. One particular listener asked whether these immigrants were paying for the water they were using at the open centre. My prompt and unhesitant reply was that I would not stay in these centres due to the very poor condition even if I were to be given a wealthy sum, let alone pay for such very basic service. Unfortunately this is the reality and mentality of some of our Maltese citizens and this is what APF needs to work upon too.

I hope that the EY2010 left an impact. It is not enough for us to respond to EU questionnaires asking us to make an assessment of the impact. I would like to see what measures are going to be taken to alleviate the most vulnerable such as children whose rate of poverty is on the increase, persons with disability and elderly people. I would like to see how the National Reform Programme is going to work in order to reach the target of lifting the 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion according to Europe 2020 strategy.

The future tasks for APF are not easy. To change a mentality and to make people aware that there are those amongst us who are suffering poverty and social exclusion, needs a lot of energy and dedication apart from being time consuming. The situation is only getting worse by the day. For our plans to take place we expressed the need to access European Funds for projects for NGOs. We stressed the importance that financial support should be given to those organisation who are working so close and at the grass roots level with people in need. An active plan should be implemented and also monitored to ensure better quality services with the involvement of those who use these same services and the participation of NGOs.

It is good to point out that the small limited funds that we managed to raise have been provided for us from EAPN Brussels through the co-funding programme that is offered to National Networks.

Finally I wish to end this report by thanking the majority of the executive members for the support they continually give me throughout the whole year. Despite their involvement in their own organisations they always find the time to contribute in this forum. It is thanks to their encouragement and their trust in my work that I find the energy and great motivation to work harder by attending to the different meetings and conferences and case studies that are held both at national and European level where I have the opportunity to meet representatives of other countries, to share different experiences and most important of all to promote as

much as I can and as best I can, the interests of our small but very much loved islands of Malta and Gozo.

Thank you!

Irene Schembri
President
Anti Poverty Forum - Malta