

Report on the work of the Anti-Poverty Network - Serbia (MPPS)

The beginnings - establishing and the first months of the Network

June 2010 – June 2011

Anti-Poverty Network - Serbia was established within the EU funded project '*Networking against poverty*' implemented from June 2010 to June 2011, by think-tank NGO SeConS Development Initiative Group.

Project was implemented in cooperation with 11 reputable Serbian non-governmental organizations and Serbian government *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit* (SIPRU), and with significant support and guidance from the European Anti-poverty Network (EAPN).

Twelve founder organizations signed *Memorandum on the establishment of the Network* in **December 2010**.

In **June 2011**, at the EAPN General Assembly in Lisbon, APN Serbia becomes a member of EAPN.

Number of project activities were completed by June 2011, ending with a final project conference where nine (9) more organizations joined APN Serbia.

During the conference first session of the Assembly of the Network was held. Four out of five members of the Managing Board were appointed, as well as the Network Coordinator (at the time member of the project team, and after the completion of the project, operating independently from any organization, in coordination with Managing Board).

Functioning without funds (from July 2011)

From mid-2011 network remains without funding but continues to operate. Four members of the Managing Board appointed by the Assembly of the Network carried out activities defined in the Statute, necessary for the operation of the Network. Host organisation of the Network was SeConS, which means that SeConS, with the approval of the SC, appeared as a legal entity in all matters related to the network, performed communication with EAPN and fulfilled other obligations.

There were several attempts to obtain funding for APNS, however, despite the effort invested in the preparation of project proposals, none of those attempts were successful. It is important to recall that the initial decision of the Assembly was that the network should remain **informal (not registered)**, which limited the possibilities to participate in calls for proposals, and occasionally, Network was attempting to obtain project funding as a competition to its own members.

Network activities – European and National level

In the previous period (mid-2011 to March 2014) Anti-poverty Network - Serbia was more active in the EU (via EAPN) than at the local level. The result is that the Network is more visible and better recognized at European than national level.

a) European level

EAPN expects proactive approach and participation of its members - national networks and European organizations, in numerous events organized. Anti-Poverty Network - Serbia has representatives in most of these events.

Executive Committee - EAPN ExCo - The Executive Board of the European network deals with organizational, operational, and other on-going issues of EAPN functioning, and bearing in mind that the EAPN is an organizations strongly driven by members, national networks are expected to nominate one representative per network and actively participate in meetings, working groups, sub-groups etc. The representative of APNS is Jasmina Krunić, coordinator of the Network, who regularly reports about the participation in the ExCo through APNS Info.

EU Inclusion Strategies group – This group is the most important consultative group of EAPN. The task of this group is to be engaged in monitoring European policies in the field of social inclusion and to make proposals and initiatives for the operation of the EAPN. The group meets 3-4 times a year for two days meetings. Representatives of APNS in this group are Marija Babović and Slobodan Cvejić, president of the APNS Managing Board, until April 2014 (since then, active as a member of MB). About EUISG activities of importance for Serbia, members of the network are informed via APNS Info, and some of the activities requested involvement of all members (eg, filling out a questionnaire on the state policy in the field of social inclusion or on the implementation of reform policies).

The General Assembly of EAPN - Once a year, the General Assembly is organized, while one in three years, Strategic Congress is taking place. So far, the APNS had representatives at meetings held in:

- 2011 - when the APNS became the member of EAPN,
- 2012 - representatives of four member organizations of APNS participated in the GA and in
- 2013 - APNS was hosting the EAPN General Assembly in Belgrade.

APNS received good evaluation for hosting of the General Assembly of EAPN in June 2013 in Belgrade and participants from 26 countries emphasized the usefulness of the information they received about the general situation in Serbia and social exclusion and poverty challenges.

People Experiencing Poverty conference - Once a year, EAPN is organizing a conference in Brussels for the delegations of national networks consisted mostly of people with direct experience of poverty and social exclusion. In 2011 and 2012 APNS had observers at the event, and in 2013 it was planned to prepare full delegation to participate. However, due to a number of obligations regarding the preparation of the General Assembly of EAPN in Belgrade, it was not feasible at the same time to adequately prepare delegation, as well.

In 2014, EAPN made the change of the date of the conference from May to September, therefore APNS decided to participate with full delegation. One of the members, Group 484 took charge of coordination and all activities related to PeP.

Participation in projects implemented by EAPN - EMIN: European Minimum Income Network - EAPN pays special attention to the development of projects and the possibility that national networks are involved in the project implementation. From December 2013, APNS is actively involved in the implementation of the project called *EMIN: European Minimum Income Network*. In accordance with the project, Managing Board hired an expert who is preparing the report and member organizations Amity, Group 484 supported the data collection, while SeConS administrated the project, as the host of the network.

b) National level

Regardless of the fact that since July 2011. APNS operates on a voluntary basis, with limited resources for action, network performs a number of activities at the national level.

Press releases, appeals, open letters - In the period from 2012 - 2013 had regular communication with the public and interest groups, on the occasion of important dates (October 17 - International Day for the Eradication of Poverty), ad hoc events (Appeal for the preservation of the Shelter), addressing an open letter to the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Assembly, etc. Some of these activities, such as a press release on the occasion of 17 October 2012 attracted public attention not only in Serbia but in the region.

EU Accession process - APNS representatives participated in the discussion related to Chapter 19. Representatives of the Network met in December 2013, on the occasion of preparation for the opening of Chapter 19 of the negotiations with the EU and participated in the discussion about the opportunities, obstacles and suggestions for further action in adapting the legal framework of the EU and Serbia in the field of social policy and employment.

Internal communication with members - All of the activities mentioned in the report, were regularly presented to all members of the APNS through APNS Info (short name of our Network in English: Anti-poverty Network Serbia), which in prepared and distributed by the network coordinator in cooperation with the members of the Managing Board.

Web portal and Facebook page - The general public can find out more about the activities of the Network on the web portal www.protivsiromastva.net, as well as on the Facebook page Anti-Poverty Network .

In addition, the network has repeatedly supported the implementation of the activities of its members.

End of the official report adopted by the Network Assembly session held in the end of April 2014.

Activities implemented in period April – November 2014

April 2014 – Network Assembly

In April 2014, on the network Assembly session, seven (7) new members joined APNS. Total number of member organization is 28.

Change of the name was voted for: instead *Anti-poverty Network – Serbia*, name is changed to *European Anti-poverty Network – Serbia*.

Managing Board got new president - Vlade Sataric. This also means that the host organization of the network is changed – from April 2014, it's organization 'Amity'. Also, fifth member of the Board was elected, after a long period of functioning with four members.

Network coordinators' mandate for work in national and European level has been confirmed.

May 2014 – Floods in Serbia

Regarding catastrophic floods that hit major part of the country, EAPN Serbia issued an appeal Support Serbia Flood Relief. Most of the member organizations were (and still are) providing support to the victims of the floods.

June 2014 – Contribution to the EUISG work

Representative of Serbian network provided contribution to the EUISG National reform program report, elaborating situation in Serbia.

August/Sept 2014 – Project proposal preparation

During August and September 2014, EAPN Serbia initiated and supported the process of preparation of the project proposal aiming to establish Western Balkan Anti-poverty Network. EAPN is leading the proposed action and Serbian and Macedonian networks are co-applicants.

Mid-August/ongoing – Network goes formal

Having in mind the wider spectrum of possibilities for funding if the network is registered, and triggered by the Multi-IPA call for proposals where Serbian network initiated the project idea and supported the preparation, majority of the members supported the initiative to register the network.

Since it was during summer holidays it took some time to gather all the decisions from the members and also to collect signatures. However, some additional changes are requested by the Serbian authorities so the process is not yet finalized.

September 2014 - Participation on PeP conference

For the first time, EAPN Serbia had a delegation on the PeP conference, held in September 2014. Coordination and implementation of all the activities was done by organization Group 484.

October 2014 – EMIN report and conference

EMIN final conference was organized at the beginning of October and Serbia report was presented and discussed. Organization that was leading the implementation of EMIN in Serbia was SeConS Development Initiative Group.

Serbian representatives also took participation in final EMIN conference in Macedonia, in the end of September 2014.

October/November 2014 – Reacting to problematic government regulation

In mid-October Serbian government adopted *Regulation on measures for social inclusion of beneficiaries of financial social assistance*. Certain articles of this regulation as well as public statements from Minister of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs caused strong reaction and protest of the public.

EAPN Serbia issued a press release explaining how this regulation will contribute to making the position of those already vulnerable and excluded, even worse. One of the biggest news agencies in Serbia (BETA) incorporated points stated by EAPNS into big article dedicated to this subject. Number of media took this article and published it via their web sites, newspapers, etc.

In November, three organizations initiated procedure for assessing the constitutionality of the *Regulation on measures for social inclusion of beneficiaries of financial social assistance*, and appealed the government to put the implementation of the Regulation on hold until the final decision of the Constitutional Court. EAPN Serbia supported this initiative.

Information sharing

In addition to the listed activities, members are informed about the most important events and news via APNS Info (simple network newsletter). EAPN publication, documents and links are also shared to the members via network mailing list.