

November 2018 Update on EAPN Strategic Thinking process

In 2017, the European Anti-Poverty Network agreed an ambitious project for 2018-2019 – a forward looking [Strategic Thinking process](#), “looking at where we want to be in 25 years, and how we will develop a more coherent, efficient and effective system which is ‘fit for purpose’”.

Let’s be clear – this is no standard strategic planning process which ends up with a document with SMART objectives for the next 3-4 years. This is truly long term thinking, aiming to really establish EAPN as a more considerable force to fight poverty and social exclusion in Europe for the next quarter of a century. EAPN has existed for almost 30 years – and we didn’t get to where we are today without some serious foresight. As we approach our 30th birthday, it’s only right that we take a meaningful look at the changes we want to see in Europe in the next 25 years, and the role we want to play in bringing about this change.

I’ve had the pleasure to lead this process throughout 2018, with a support of the inspiring staff team in Brussels, and the guidance of the Bureau (both old and new). As we approach the end of the second phase of the process (Agreeing a Theory of Change and Political Analysis) and the start of the third and final phase (Decision Making: Agreeing our Strategic Direction), I’d like to take a step back and share a few highlights from the process to date, and spell out the way forward.

Highlights

Together, we have accomplished a lot in less than a year – a few highlights include:

- **[A membership survey](#), with responses from 30 members** – 25 National Networks and 5 European Organisations. This has provided some fantastic hard data and evidence about the direction our members would like to take over the next 25 years.
- **A major meeting in Brussels in July**, with 2 representatives of all of our national networks, led to clear priority actions and recommended changes on 6 major areas, notably: EAPN identity, Political Analysis, Participation, Membership, Human Capacity, and Structural Change. (See report [here](#))
- **Some big changes have already been actioned.**
 - a) In September 2018, the General Assembly voted for a ‘parity of voting’ amongst members by a large majority, underpinning solidarity between members.
 - b) We’ve just agreed our [Theory of Change](#), at the end of the second phase of the process. This is a huge achievement, and thus theory of change will underpin the strategic choices to be taken in Phase 3.
 - c) EAPN Netherlands is working actively with the Staff Team and Bureau to clarify the practical implications of the 2017 Dutch Resolution on participation. We are thus well on our way to taking strategic decisions on this front.
 - d) The Bureau and staff team are working actively on an analysis of our governance structures, with a view to presenting concrete options for discussion and decision in 2019.

The next 10 months will be crucial for this process, and we commit today to ensuring the EAPN members are kept fully informed as the process continues, and have plenty of opportunity to input, guide and feedback. The primary method for this will be the Members Room, where all documents will be uploaded. If members don’t yet have a login to Members Room, we strongly encourage you to contact Florence Tornincasa florence.tornincasa@eapn.eu as soon as possible to rectify this!

We’ll provide monthly updates to the whole membership (all will be captured on Members Room), and there will be key moments to discuss and reflect on key recommendations, notably at Bureau

meetings, the Ex Co meeting in April, a shared Ex Co / EUISG session in June, and finally at the General Assembly in September. (Dates TBC). Outside of these physical meetings, we will look at building in online discussions via facebook and twitter chats. We'll do our utmost to ensure the voices of people experiencing poverty are part of the conversations, and we reiterate our call here for National Coordinators of people experiencing poverty to send your coordinated response to the three questions which we shared with you recently with the office (send answers to [Abigail development@eapn.eu](mailto:Abigail.development@eapn.eu)) by 10 December!

I'm truly excited by where we are in the process of developing EAPN into a more dynamic, more effective member-driven organisation, and particularly motivated by the idea of EAPN as nurturing an enabling a grass-roots anti-poverty movement throughout Europe – this was a key focus on conversation in Vienna, and I hope that the revised Theory of Change provides a clear picture of what we understand by this!

In excitement and solidarity

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Leo Williams', followed by several horizontal scribbles.

Leo Williams

Director