



Reaction on the proposal for Change of EAPN's structure.

We prepared a reaction for the webinar that took place on the 23rd of May. Unfortunately the audio did not cooperate, so participation was not possible. For that reason we brought, during the webinar, in a written reaction.

There are three things that are clear to us.

- 1. There is a huge feeling for a change.*
- 2. We are a network, not an institute or a consultancy. That means that we do have the same strengths and weaknesses as the EU itself. We have to deal with all the cultures, experiences of all the NN, including the changes in the last decades. EAPN's strength is that we need each other, that all NN and EO's are part of the network, have there say, the possibility to influence, to create. This makes us unique and this has to stay afloat.*
- 3. We feel the need to open the doors for more and more influential Participation of the PeP, which does not mean that they take over, but that we pave paths to involve them as much as and wherever we can.*

EAPN is more than just a structure. This important to realize. If we give 12 persons, of which even 2 outsiders the power to rule, what is left for the NN and EO's? What is left of the uniqueness of EAPN?

We discussed this problems several times and we feel that we may have found a solution that can fitt all.

- 1. We elect a board of 10 or 12 persons, that has the rights to involve experts as advisers. These advisers are not a member of the board, nor have the right to vote.*
- 2. The EXCO will stay in tact, but will function as a Supervisory Board, that will come together once a year at the GA. This way the responsibility stays with the NN and EO's.*
- 3. We will seek for the improvement of the Participation of the PeP within the work of EAPN. There are already changes made that we see as very positive and we are willing to support the further development.*

This way EAPN can become more effective, can seek for the change into a movement and will be a driver for Participation, but it also will stay the network of the NN and EO's.

Jo

One of the reactions was that this is just a partial proposal and does not include e.g. the policy work. I oppose this, since our feeling is that this is the heart of the discussion: who will be in charge and where does the power go to?

The basics of change for EAPN NL are:

1. Ownership.

Who owns EAPN. Now this is clear: the national networks and the European Organizations. But what if we have a board of 12, of which even 2 may be experts, so not part of EAPN. The answer seems easy, since the General Assembly is always the highest body that will, in the end, take all decisions. Fact however is that a same feeling of necessary change that some had in 2010 brought the GA back to a three hour meeting where we agree to the existing work plan and financial budget and agree to the same for next year. That is it. So the question of ownership is open. For that reason we propose two steps:

A. Should we agree to a board of 12, no outsiders can be member. Advisors OK, but without voting rights.

B. The EXCO stays in place, as a Supervisory Board that will meet once a year at the GA. This may mean that they meet a day and a half after the GA.

2. Empowerment

We talk a lot about empowerment , but now this is an issue within the network itself. Who has the power? Who elects –and controls- the 12 members of the board?

3. Involvement

Now all NN and EO's can be involved in the network, by being member of the several bodies. The proposed structure takes this away, since some networks no longer are part of the decision making process.

4. Participation

If EAPN wants to open doors for people experiencing poverty and/or exclusion, to give them to possibility to participate, it has to be clear about the participation of the NN and EO's. Taking into account that the participation of those members not always is what EAPN hopes, needs, expects.

What a feeling for a need for change does not need is “pressure” and “rush”, since this will only create a stronger opposition. Appreciating that this process is build up involving all, or at least as much as, we also have the negative experience of the 2010-2012 process, where the GA is brought back from a three day meeting of discussion, exchange, learning and deciding to the three hours meeting we spoke about. Here involvement is part of the process.

5. Identity

EAPN is a network, not a institute, a consultancy of what so ever. So a change does have to involve the identity of the members. Now we feel like a kind of family, but how do we feel once we have a board and a lot of groups? For us this feels as being brought under in one or the other group and that is it.

A need for change

There is a feeling that EAPN has to change, what is all right, since we cannot stick into a kind of status quo bubble and act as if nothing changes. Question though is how we can meet the need for change with the 5 priorities as set out above? The under laying proposal does, in EAPN NL opinion, not meet those priorities. EAPN NL sees the change as follows, and the papers, proposal and discussion have been helpful to paint this ideas.

1. Restore the GA.

If this is the most important body, that in the end takes or approves all decisions, it has to be a serious meeting where NN and EO's meet, exchange, discuss, propose, decide and create.

2. Give the EXCO its own role.

3. Out of the EXCO 10 or 12 persons are chosen as full board. Conditions:

A. A member of this board has to be an EXCO member.

B. There is a good division between North, South, East and West and Central Europe.

C. There are also members elected with an experience in poverty and/or social exclusion.

D. Advisors can take part at the meetings, but without the right to vote and in a clear role as advisors.

3. The creation of expert – or issue groups can be part of the process.

Policy work

What about the EU ISG? Will it disappear, get a new role?

Let us look at the facts:

1. Starting from today, 26th of May, we will have a new European Parliament.

2. In October we will have a new Commission.

This will lead to a new agenda, to the end of the National Reform Plans, the Annual Convention of Inclusive Growth, et cetera. What about the Social Pillar? Will it be part of the new agenda?

Question is how we can get influence in the next Agenda, and especially the Social Agenda, of the new Commission. So this is a great moment to discuss the future of the ISG.

Annual meeting of People Experiencing Poverty 2019

What we know for sure is that this years PeP conference will take place. Seen the discussion during the PeP coordinators meeting in Helsinki and the interesting outcomes, the PeP conference may set a great part of the new social agenda of EAPN. The issues that will be brought forward may be the issues to work on. This means that ISG will, starting in 2020, no longer be a huge group that meets three times a year, but will be formed around these issues, plus the issue of minimum income and in work poverty, to develop new policy ideas and proposals. This may, of course, also be influenced by the 2020-2030 social agenda of the new Commission and new Parliament. This also strengthens our position to keep our "Yearly Summit of the Poor and Excluded" proceed in the next five years.

We also should establish a special group that will work with those of the over 200 candidates that signed our commitment and that are chosen as MEP.

EAPN has a desire to give more space to the PeP. This process has already been started and looks exciting. A group like COMM'ON will be used to influence this process, just as the idea of opening the possibility for PeP to become 'affiliate members' of the network.

No change for change itself, but change into greater involvement, more participation, changing into a movement and become an even more important player on the European social field. This is what EAPN Netherlands sees and supports. Taken always into account that: *"A process is done, when it is done. As long there are doubts it is not fit for change."*

Plus, what ever we decide, it always has to meet with what EAPN is capable to deliver and should never transcend the possibilities of the staff! In our opinion it is better to do less, than take an overload on board.

Jo Bothmer, 26th of May 2019
In behalf of EAPN Netherlands.