



Notes of Bureau Meeting

4 June 2021, 15:00-17:00

Zoom

Participants: Carlos Susias (Spain), Biljana Dukovska (Macedonia), Ian Johnston (IFSW), Honoratte Muhanzi (Norway).

Participants (Staff): Anna Krozser, Cláudia Guerra, Hélder Ferreira, Magda Tancau, Philippe Lemmens.

Apologies: Eleni Karaoli (Cyprus).

Session 1: General Intro

- Agenda approved
- No conflicts of interest

Carlos introduces the session and gives the floor to Anna since she is resigning from EAPN.

Anna starts her speech thankful for the opportunity provided and the trust placed in her. As she explains, the main reasons for this decision were that she was facing chronic work overload and struggling with work life balance due to a myriad of reasons. She understands that EAPN is facing a complicated period, therefore, she postponed the departure, leaving EAPN on June 25th.

Ian appreciates her work but finds her reasons for leaving a bit contradictory. He is worried about damage limitations, as it was recently suggested in the Brussels “bubble” that EAPN standards are perceived as lacking. He suggested that Anna could present that she was offered a position she could not refuse with the purpose of giving EAPN a more positive image.

Biljana mentions that she is surprised with her resignation, but she understands the reasons. EAPN must consider Anna’s motives when hiring a new person for the same position, to improve conditions and to prevent this situation from happening again.

Honoratte regrets Anna’s departure, but she understands her motives. She apologizes for not being able to solve the problem and questions “*What can we do to support you?*” even though Anna has already made her decision. It is crucial that all factors are considered to recognize lessons for the future and move forward.

The President understands Anna's decision and thanks her for postponing the departure since it provides them additional time to find someone new. If EAPN is unable to support the policy team, it is not worth maintaining the network. Therefore, the policy team should be

strengthened. He does not believe EAPN's prestige has diminished as they had a competent policy team. He also mentions that more time should be devoted on politics than on internal affairs. He considers that Anna's departure is the result of several events in recent times: the Director's entry on a sabbatical year, Mathias' departure, etc. She was responsible for all the policy part and without much support. Finally, he thanks her immensely for her work and would appreciate it if she could provide them any advice.

The director emphasizes that it was a pleasure to work with Anna. Despite facing substantial workloads, they worked very well together. He also underlines that Anna is a professional and was always available despite the difficulties that EAPN was facing. He wishes her the best.

Anna reiterates that the situation was based on the imbalance between her professional and personal life. As such, she would never report her departure in a way that would harm EAPN's reputation. She is surprised by Ian's comments about EAPN's reputation as EAPN continues to be invited to share its positions and has solid speaking engagements. She also points out that EAPN lost two key people in a pivotal year and that the team performed its best given the situation.

Ian thanks Anna for her comments and asks if she has any thoughts on whether the salary should be increased.

Anna believes that she is not the best person to answer as she is not aware of the type of salary expected in this type of position.

The President finishes the session.

Session 2: Anna's departure – measures to mitigate the impact

The President introduces the session.

Magda starts her speech thanking the presence of all members. She mentions that everyone on the team is overwhelmed and stressed but assured that the entire staff wants to put in the necessary energy to get through this period. They all agree that they need an experienced Policy Coordinator willing to stay with them and propose a different approach to recruitment, a headhunting process. The team also considers it a good solution to hire a short-term Policy Officer as a temporary solution and that hiring a Policy Coordinator should be a long-term process. They express concerns about the FPA due to Anna's departure and ask members to support them through this process.

Ian appreciates the commitment of the staff and their willingness to work harder in difficult situations. Organisations and their commitment to their standards are judged by the type of recruiting they follow, so he is not in favour of the headhunting process. He states that everyone wants to have the best person available for the job, but he has difficulty seeing how they will get it if they want to make the permanent post (coordinator of the policy work) temporary. For him, EAPN attracts candidates from a sufficient calibre and they should advertise the post as a permanent one.

The Director states that the team's proposal focuses on a headhunting process for the position of the new Policy Coordinator. In his opinion, it should be a medium / long term process to secure the right candidate and describes advantages and disadvantages of both methods.

Headhunting: "If we clearly identify potential candidates and if we have any hint that they are available to change positions, it is a viable option. We need to discuss implications, whether we

take the risk or not. If a candidate comes to work for EAPN from a member organisation, it could create some problems". **Traditional recruitment process:** "Is more diversity-friendly but takes longer. It also leaves the issue of Anna's departure more exposed". They should weigh up the different possibilities, the feasibility of implementing them and the consequences. They should privilege the fastest and the one that gives more guarantees to achieve what they want. Finally, he declares that the hiring of a second Policy Officer should be done in a short-term process.

Biljana expresses that they should improve the Terms of Responsibility that will be sent in the recruitment process. She also mentions that EAPN lost key people not only by function but also by knowledge. She believes that if they want to continue with EAPN history, they must hire someone with more experience and knowledge and who is close to the reality of EAPN.

Anna clarifies that in the team proposal the time-bound proposal was for the second Policy Officer. She indicates that they need to give Sabrina the perspective that she is going to be supported. Therefore, she strongly urges for the need of the second Policy Officer. In conclusion, despite her departure, she offers informal support for the FPA process.

Honoratte indicates that she is not so concerned with finding someone competent but more with what EAPN has to offer. She finds the offer of a permanent position more attractive. They should question themselves if they have the means to keep the people they hire. It is essential to choose between the two methods, but mainly to know what they want to offer to reassure the people they hire.

The President considers the team's proposal very interesting, but he finds some limitations regarding headhunting process. He requests that the document prepared by the team be restricted to staff and members of the Bureau. He recommends going directly to the members and asking if they know of candidates to fill the position immediately and asking one or two EUISG members to help them in the meantime. If next year the FPA is accepted, it is imperative to reinforce the policy team. He proposes doing a small internal consultation between the national members and the European networks to let them know they want to hire an official interim person until December 31st and set the deadline for next week to define this situation.

Ian believes they should be thoughtful enough and talk to Sabrina about what additional support would be helpful for her. They must prioritize the EC contract, but in the future, they will have to analyse why good employees want to leave EAPN. He thanks Bureau members for all the work carried out through these times, particularly considering all the difficulties they faced.

The Director refers to the need for a second Policy Officer to support Sabrina and states they need to come up with a short-term solution. He is willing to support Sabrina and a possible second policy officer, noting that the only limitation is time. As for the position of Policy Coordinator, a medium-term process should be done and they need to decide which method they will opt for. As suggested by Carlos, they should ask members to help them through this transition period.

Magda clarifies that they were not referring to aggressive headhunting. The objective is to identify people who want to change careers, have temporary contracts and have good references. She disagrees with Ian as they have few relevant candidates and she asked him to listen to the team. She also observes that there are not many people willing to work in

leadership roles at EAPN and questions how the EC will perceive these recurrent staff departures.

In relation to these repetitive situations, Philippe recalls that the team listens very carefully to Anna. He pleads for people to listen the team because they are the ones who work together with the people that leave EAPN. Answering to Ian, he states that it is good to have principles, but they must face reality, be pragmatic and find the quickest solution to tackle the problem.

The President states they need to find someone promptly and proposes making an internal statement expressing they are urgently looking for someone.