

Membership Assessment and Support System

Finalised Proposal for Adoption by the Executive Committee, developed by the Task Force on Developing a Membership Review System in EAPN, based on the mandate and guidance given by the Executive Committee

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This draft Membership Assessment and Support System was developed by the Task Force appointed by the Executive Committee. The document outlining a member-led peer-review system, applicable to National Networks, was submitted for consultation to the Executive Committee, which is the body primarily responsible for membership development. The feedback was then discussed and integrated in the final document.

The Task Force members represented different network structures and levels of engagement, different individual and collective experiences, and together formed a good mix of geographic and gender perspectives. Each item was thoroughly analysed and proposals emerged through debate and consensus-building methods.

The Task Force met three times and members developed proposals between these meetings. The first meeting was dedicated to understanding the reality of the National Networks, clarifying the expectation from the Executive Committee and looking at the current relations of National Networks among themselves horizontally, within the European network linking national to European realities; their engagement through different statutory and working groups of EAPN; their focus at national level; financial relations and the challenges they face. International Planned Parenthood Federation was invited to share their system of membership accreditation, the strengths and weaknesses this system has, and the learning they have been drawing from it, following ten years of implementation. This invitation followed a good practice presentation in the Development Officers' lunch meetings of the Social Platform. After the first meeting, members of the Task Force developed their proposals for a peer review system for EAPN. The second meeting was used to shape one common proposal for a horizontal member-led Membership Assessment and Support System (MASS). The Task Force developed then a draft and submitted it for consultation to the Executive Committee. Finally, the last meeting was used to improve the MASS Proposals, check it against the Terms of Reference and guidance from the Executive Committee. All feedback was analysed point by point and suggestions integrated as seen appropriate. During this whole process, the Task Force worked on the premise of what is standard practice in democratic NGO functioning that EAPN subscribes to through its vision, mission and values.

The current document, finalised by the Task Force, is submitted for adoption in the Executive Committee. The EXCO Subgroup on Membership Development and Support leads on its adoption and implementation. It is proposed that this system be implemented for 6 years (two terms of the Strategic Plan), with appropriate monitoring and amendment by the Executive Committee, based on the learning drawn during its implementation.

The document is composed of 4 parts:

1. *Preamble*– outlining the reasons for introducing a membership review system, the guidance of the Executive Committee, the statutory and financial membership requirements applicable to all members in an open and transparent way.

2. *Four Pillars of Successful National Anti Poverty Networks - Areas of Assessment and Corresponding Criteria* – explaining the four areas of membership assessment and the essential and recommended criteria under each of these that a member undergoing assessment would aim to fulfil or improve, along with the documents they could submit as proof of fulfilling these criteria.
3. *Implementation process of the MASS* – detailing how the member-led peer assessment process would be carried out.
4. *Implementation, revision and financial implications.*

1. Preamble

EAPN is as strong as its members are and the Membership Assessment and Support System is a framework proposal that would serve as a reference point for National Network members in their aim to build a strong membership base and become successful national anti poverty platforms. It is hoped that all groups and actors involved in EAPN would contribute to its implementation in the National Networks, and the Executive Committee has the particular responsibility for leading on this process in the membership. Respecting the diversity of members and seeking to foster their development and growth, EAPN should complement the MASS with a renewed training and capacity building agenda, and ensure spaces for horizontal member-led learning (for instance, EAPN's Learning Forum).

Knowing the reality of EAPN members has been a constant objective, and some members have been calling for putting in place a membership review process, already in the past Strategic Plan. At that time, the Executive Committee decided that members needed to focus on all the work around the year 2010 and that after that year, EAPN would initiate this process. Thus, the Executive Committee Subgroup on Membership Development and Support has called for the development of a peer review system that would encourage members to set objectives for improvement, as ambitious as those that they establish together for EAPN Europe, and set in place action plans to achieve those.

For over 20 years, EAPN has grown to a large network, counting now 29 National Networks and 18 European Organisation as members. In this period, the life of member organisations has not had a stable growing progression, but was rather characterised by ups and downs due to many external and internal factors. Some members have experienced internal difficulties and had to rebuild their structures, re-joining the European Network once they became stronger again, others were weakened by the challenging national contexts that they had to operate in.

Keeping this in mind, and the fact that EAPN has set the objective of carrying out a review of its members, the Executive Committee has appointed a Task Force for the development of a membership review system for EAPN, to respond to the organizations' needs, to reflect the values, mission and vision of EAPN, and to serve as a guidance all members' development and growth.

Guidelines from the Executive Committee for the Development of a Membership Review System

The Executive Committee gave the following guidelines that broadly reflect the mission of EAPN: *Develop a set of criteria for what makes a good National Network member of EAPN, along these three following points:*

- a/ ability to influence/lobby national governments for better policies*
- b/ involvement of people experiencing poverty*
- c/ grow as a National Network and raise membership base.*

The Task Force drafted a framework proposal that can be used to encourage learning and positive change among members, at the same time respecting the contexts in which National Networks exist and the diversity of approaches to combating poverty and social exclusion across Europe. As there was no representative of European Organisations in the Task Force, the resulting proposal is for an assessment and support system for National Networks only. An adapted form of this system could be put in place for European Organisations at a later stage, with their full engagement.

The EXCO Subgroup on Membership is primarily responsible for overseeing its implementation, ensuring the allocation of resources and taking up the learning in EAPN.

1.1 Introducing the Membership Assessment and Support System (MASS)

MASS is a horizontal, member-led, peer review system, that aims to set clear areas of assessment and development. It supports members undergoing the review through a process of development by learning, identifying areas for improvement, and developing those areas with peer help and guidance.

Currently, there is no clear definition of what a National Network is, however, there are a few statutory requirements of EAPN membership, primarily spelled out in the Standing Orders:

Art 4.1. *EAPN expects that its members will:*

- work to actively support EAPN's activities.*
- work to bring attention to EAPN's activities in their own country or organization.*
- work to promote the active participation of people experiencing poverty and exclusion and the organizations in which they participate.*
- be open to cooperation with a wide range of anti-poverty NGOs in their country.*
- contribute to framing EAPN's policy positions.*
- be able to establish links between the reality of poverty in their own country and the positive or negative impact of the EU on that reality.*

Art 9.5. *The General Assembly shall examine the progress reports on network development presented by each National Delegation.*

In addition, **Article 3 of the Standing Orders** outlines the actions and activities the European Anti Poverty Network can fulfil, in accordance with its objectives, for the benefit both of its members, and, more generally, of all people and groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Upon joining EAPN, a National Network agrees to the EAPN Statutes, Standing Orders and signs up to the Vision, Mission, Values and Objectives, as described in the Strategic Plan. There is no formal procedure for subscribing to these, except for stating it in the letter of intent, but it is assumed that the joining member integrates these in their structures and actions. MASS brings all these elements together, as part of one clear and transparent system.

EAPN also has a financial relation with its members. National Networks sign contracts with EAPN Europe every year to carry out work related to EAPN European objectives (namely, consultation and input into key EU policy positions, preparations of delegates for the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion, and translation of EAPN Europe documents/publications that are relevant to the country). This funding is vital for some National Networks to be able to carry out the membership tasks set by the statutory and working groups of EAPN. It is not intended to be the only source of funding for the National Networks, but a supporting element in their engagement with EU policy-making.

2. The four Pillars of Strong National Anti Poverty Networks - Areas of Assessment and Corresponding Criteria

For several years, EAPN has not implemented systematically the statutory requirements mentioned above, which has given way to assumptions about the members. The EAPN Bureau has already indicated that annual reports from Networks will be expected prior to every General Assembly, starting with the 2013 one, based on the requirements in the Standing Orders.

The MASS is a framework tool, which aims to propose a simple and clear system of requirements and support that should be applicable to every National Network, regardless of the moment it joins EAPN or of the place it is in. It should be seen as an opportunity to take stock of where the National Network stands in relation to four pillars of strong Networks, i.e. the four areas of assessment below, and what steps it can take to improve one or all of those. These pillars are based on statutory requirements and the contents of the current EAPN Strategic Plan 2012-2014, mentioned in the Preamble. They are the basis of EAPN's *raison d'être*, and should be assessed through a peer-review system.

It is clear that, while structuring models and the reality of each network might be different, the assessment areas proposed should be seen as a statement of aspiration and integrity by any Network at any moment of its life.

The Four Pillars of Strong National Anti Poverty Networks – Areas of Assessment and Corresponding Criteria

1. Influence National Governments for Better Policies: Advocacy, Lobbying and Policy-Making linked to European level developments. As one of the main aims of EAPN, its members should take into consideration certain criteria on this key area, to make sure that an important part of their activities is focused on monitoring and influencing the design of policies (especially social and antipoverty ones, but not only), and measures to improve the situation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, linking national to European level developments and ensuring effective two-way (i.e. national \leftrightarrow EU) action.

2. Participation of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion in Internal and External Workings of the National Network. As considered in EAPN's values and key messages, its members must try to enhance the leading role of people experiencing poverty and focus on this horizontal objective constantly, not only in the development of external activities, but also in the internal management of EAPN members themselves, with a view to empowering people experiencing poverty to be actors, decision-makers and political representatives of the change EAPN is working towards.

3. Development and Growth of the Network. As a way to ensure the capacity to really achieve the above, every EAPN member should aspire to continually strengthen its base, grow and bring together different organizations, constantly reaching out to large and small groups and organizations, , trying to synergize actions and become stronger, in order to be more effective and promote cooperation and understanding between them. Together with other members, contribute to strengthening the European Network.

4. Good Governance and Strong Internal Democracy. National Networks should guarantee that their internal functioning is clearly based upon democratic and participatory procedures and principles, with transparent governance and decision-making, upholding to the best ability possible the democratic values and principles that EAPN is advocating for, towards society at large and decision-makers. This pillar is the foundation of EAPN's existence and key achieving the change it stands for.

2.1. Influence National Governments for Better Policies: Advocacy, Lobbying and Policy-Making linked to European level developments

- **Why is it important?**
 - Policy lobbying is a central pillar of the Mission, Vision and Values of EAPN, so members need to allocate time to follow up and get involved in the key debates and documents produced by EAPN.
 - Raising awareness, not just of policy makers, but also of the public opinion and of society, as a way to produce impact and social change.
 - Contributing to development of collective knowledge on anti poverty strategies, based on the realities that people experiencing poverty live in.

- **How do you do it?**
 - Essential:
 1. Production of key policy documents on specific relevant issues, as well as analysis, position papers, press releases, etc.
 2. Relevant (individual or collective) meetings, organized by the NN, or in which it has participated.
 3. Awareness-raising, visibility and dissemination activities.

 - Recommended:
 - Lobbying and advocacy strategies (with Parliament, Government, key stakeholders...).
 - Communication strategy.
 - Self-assessment to evaluate the impact of policy actions.
 - Organization or participation in campaigning and direct actions (including demonstrations, flashmobs or other public initiatives).
 - Cooperation and alliances to develop or support policy actions with other NGOs (environmental, development, migration etc.) and other actors (trade unions, think tanks, universities etc).
 - Research on poverty and social exclusion.

- **Documents**
 1. Full list of key policy documents produced (policy letters, press releases, position papers, publications, monitoring of Structural Funds, etc).
 2. List of relevant meetings attended or organized, to demonstrate contacts with Government, Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of European Parliament (MEPs), members of the Social Protection Committee (SPC) or the Employment Committee (EMCO), contacts with the Independent Expert on Social Protection and Social Exclusion, other decision making bodies, events organized or attended on poverty and social exclusion, participation in committees or other public bodies.
 3. List of relevant dissemination activities (website, newsletters, statements, press releases, EU-relevant information disseminated, mailing list for membership, number of small NGOs reached etc).

- Different examples of lobbying, advocacy, and campaigning schemes and strategies.
- Models of impact assessment.
- Audiovisual tools (videos, photographs, recorded messages...).
- Different models for agreements and alliances with other organizations and stakeholders.

2.2. Participation of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion in Internal and External Workings of the National Network

○ *Why is it important?*

- EAPN recognises that People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion carry unique experience and knowledge that needs to be integrated in the internal governance of National Anti Poverty Networks and in the policy-making actions they initiate.
- Participation of people and activists with direct experience of poverty in anti poverty organisations, in the National Networks and in policy-making and society at large, is at the foundation to building a democratic, social and sustainable development model that EAPN is advocating for. Therefore, National Networks should strive to put in place systems of engaging people with direct experience of poverty, not only as beneficiaries, but also as decision-makers internally, and as political representatives of Networks in all their activities, and in their decision-making structures.

○ *How do you do it?*

- Essential:
 1. National, regional and/or local periodic meetings of people experiencing poverty.
 2. Involvement of people experiencing poverty in the network's structures and activities (number of such people involved in the network; number of people/activists with direct experience of poverty in decision-making structures; number of people/activists with direct experience of poverty involved in working groups, projects and other activities).
 3. Preparation of a delegation and participation in the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty, and its planning processes.
- Recommended:
 1. Specific participation strategies for direct involvement of people experiencing poverty in organizations and in the National Network, adapting objectives agreed in the EAPN Participation Strategy.
 2. Securing inclusive internal rules of democracy that ensure participation of activists with direct experience of poverty in the governing and other statutory bodies of the National Network, representing their organisations;

3. Participation of people experiencing poverty as volunteers or activists in projects, lobby or awareness-raising activities of the National Network.

o **Documents**

1. List of meetings organized at national, regional, or local level, number of participants and lists of attendance.
 2. Number of participants in the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty and in other EAPN European meetings, and their contribution.
 3. Lists of people experiencing poverty involved in the NN activities (number of people, and type of activity in which they are involved).
- National Network's participation strategies or policies.
 - Extracts from statutes or standing orders.
 - EAPN Participation Strategy – Sharing the Power and Increasing the Ownership.
 - Examples of participation strategies of people experiencing poverty in organizations and National Networks.
 - List of people experiencing poverty participating in the NN governing and other statutory bodies (names and positions).

2.3. Development and Growth of the Network

2.3.1 Growth

o **Why is it important?**

- It helps Networks be stronger, and be more effective, by reaching out to excluded groups and generally to NGOs involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, thus building a stronger base.
- It allows the Networks to organize themselves in a better way and to build consensus among different types of anti poverty organisations.
- It ensures Networks are a space of developing new ideas and perspectives on the realities and solutions to combating poverty and social exclusion, and to bringing about the change EAPN is fighting for.

o **How do you do it?**

- Essential:
 1. Size of the NN (number and type of members; number of people from member organizations engaged in Network activities).
 2. Enlargement of the NN (how many new members have registered over the past year; new activists or volunteers involved in the Network activities).
 3. A growth plan, including data collection regarding the perspective of the Network's enlargement (how many relevant NGOs exist and can be approached, and the number of small NGOs and self-organised groups reached).

- Recommended:
 - Design of a development strategy.
 - ...
- **Documents**
 1. List of NN membership, their main focus and contacts.
 2. List of NN new membership over the past year, their main focus and contacts.
 3. List of relevant NGOs that can be invited to join the NN.
 - Database of NN members.
 - Different examples of enlargement strategies...

2.3.2 Training and capacity building

- **Why is it important?**
 - Strong Anti Poverty Networks should be a space for learning and growth for all the people and member organisations involved.
 - Well-functioning Networks have in place training and induction processes for all governing and working structures, and for new people involved.
 - National Networks should provide training and capacity building for better impact of their activities.
- **How do you do it?**
 - Essential:
 1. Organization of training and capacity-building activities (number and type of activities organized; number of people and (small) organizations reached with capacity building about EU policy-making processes).
 2. Exchange of experiences, good and bad practices (number of exchanges and examples of practices exchanged).
 3. Participation in EAPN training and capacity-building activities (number/type of activities in which the NN has participated; number of people who participated and the way the learning has been integrated in the National Network).
 - Recommended:
 1. Self-assessment, monitoring and support activity.
 2. Participation in EAPN statutory and working groups.
 3. Developing cooperation with NGO development centres, think tanks and coaching activities...
- **Documents**
 1. List of training and capacity building activities organized by de NN (specifying number and type of activities organized, and number of people and (small) organizations reached).
 2. Number of exchanges and list of practices exchanged (attaching, if possible, documents on good/bad practices exchanged).
 3. Document on participation in EAPN training and capacity-building activities (containing number/type of activities and number of people who

participate as well as how the learning from these was integrated in the Network).

- Models of self-assessment, monitoring and support activities.
- List of participation in EAPN statutory and working groups (containing number/type of groups and number of people who participate) as well as system for engaging Network representatives with EAPN Europe work.

2.4. Good Governance and Strong Internal Democracy

2.4.1 Strong Internal Democracy

○ **Why is it important?**

- Democracy is an essential pillar for institutions and organizations all over Europe, and EAPN is no exception to that. Good governance and strong internal democracy are a prerequisite to achieving EAPN's vision and mission.
- EAPN National Networks represent EAPN in their countries and their internal democracy reflects on the credibility of EAPN as a European Network. Therefore, they must uphold, to their best ability, the values and principles of work agreed upon together within the European Network.
- National Networks should implement clear, open and transparent democratic principles in all their internal actions, and strive to continuously improve those.

○ **How do you do it?**

- Essential:
 1. NN Statutes and internal rules of procedure are in agreement with EAPN Statutes.
 2. Democratic elections in NNs and membership organizations.
 3. Organisation of regular General Assembly and other statutory body meetings and existence of democratic and transparent internal decision-making processes.
- Recommended:
 - Explicit participation channels: concrete procedures to ensure two-way participation and communication top-bottom, and bottom-up¹.
 - Induction manuals/documents explaining the internal decision-making processes to all members, and mentoring new members into understanding the functioning of the Network.
 - Regular revisiting of the vision, mission and values of EAPN and of the National Network.

○ **Documents**

1. Clear Statutes and Standing Orders for all National Networks submitted to EAPN.

¹On this issue EAPN-Spain is developing a specific presentation of the structure to ensure participation at different levels happens according to the Statutes and is clear for everyone (draft document available in Spanish)

2. Explicit description of the election and appointment processes in Statutes, Standing Orders and Minutes of the National General Assembly, including minutes of GA and of other statutory bodies.
3. Explicit description of internal decision-making processes on main issues (admission and expulsion of membership...).
 - Other concrete procedures of internal participation.
 - ...

2.4.2 Management of workers and volunteers/activists

o *Why is it important?*

- The consistency of our actions always relies on a clear code of ethics and a correct and transparent management process, both in relation to the volunteers² who contribute to the success of the EAPN National Networks, as well as the workers involved with them.
- As many national organisations, EAPN National Networks are supported through public funding, hence making good use of these funds and being efficient through qualified management procedures is essential.
- Management should be based on Principles of Transparency and Good Practice, and the EAPN Networks should have in place such practices for managing and recognising the contribution of the many volunteers involved in the Network and of the staff (where applicable).

o *How do you do it?*

- Essential:
 1. Annual Report, reflecting on Network building, internal governance and management of volunteers and staff.
 2. Minutes of National General Assembly and other documents illustrating management practices.
 3. Explicit framework of labour conditions of NN workers and volunteer management and recognition policies.
- Recommended:
 - o Adoption of explicit ethical criteria or principles.
 - o Minutes of national EXCO/Bureau meetings.
 - o Volunteer management and recognition policies.
 - o Other specific conditions for NN workers (equal opportunities employment...).
 - o Adoption of Principles of Transparency and Good Practice³

² See EAPN's Position on Volunteering and the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion, EAPN 2011, <http://www.eapn.eu/en/news-and-publications/publications/eapn-position-papers-and-reports/volunteering-and-the-fight-against-poverty-eapns-position>

³There is a Spanish Foundation (Fundación Lealtad) that has developed certain principles for NGOs, and assesses them in order to see if they fulfill them, as a guide for donors (document available in Spanish). The principles are the following: Principle of Regulation and Operation of the Governing Body; Principle of Clarity and Publicity of the Social Aim; Principle of Activity Planning and Monitoring; Principle of Communication and Accurate Image of Information; Principle of Financial Transparency; Principle of Financial Diversity; Principle of Control in the use of funds; Principle of Presentation of the Annual Balance and Fulfillment of Legal Requirements; Principle of Promotion of Voluntary Work. <http://www.fundacionlealtad.org/web/jsp/publicaciones>

o **Documents**

1. Annual Report (containing, amongst others, the fulfilment of EAPN's membership requirements)⁴.
2. Minutes of the National Network General Assembly, including list of EXCO/Bureau members.
3. Collective bargaining or explicit reference of the juridical framework of labour conditions to be applied to National Network workers (in cases where the Network has employees).
4. Volunteer management and recognition policy.
 - Code of Ethics.
 - Minutes of national EXCO/Bureau Meetings.
 - Equal Opportunity Plans, Positive Action Measures towards volunteers (especially people and activists with direct experience of poverty) and staff, non-discrimination mechanisms, or other initiatives.
 - If existing, official assessment and certificates on Transparency and Good Practice.
 - Internal and/or external audits on Transparency and Good Practice.

2.4.3 Strategic Planning/Thinking

o **Why is it important?**

- Strategic Planning/Thinking ensures that EAPN National Networks develop a vision of mid to long-term objectives and helps them keep a clear picture of the impact it aims to achieve.
- Strategic Planning/Thinking helps organisations relate the totality of objectives to the resources they have and develop steps to achieving them.
- EAPN National Networks actively debate triennial Strategic Plans for EAPN Europe. That is a rich debate, allowing the members to compare their perspectives and to build a common understanding of where they want to go together in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in Europe and worldwide. The learning from this rich process and debate should be integrated in National Networks' Strategic Plans, to ensure congruence between what EAPN National Networks set to do in their countries and what they assume responsibility for together with other members in relation to European anti poverty processes.

o **How do you do it?**

- Essential:
 1. Current National Network Strategic Plan, with a clear definition of the vision, mission and values, including general goals (for the period) and

⁴ The Annual Report is an essential requirement under several categories and it could include the following information (context analysis, organizational management and growth section, participation section, policy-influencing activities section, communication and awareness, main accomplishments and the challenges for the future, as well as the financial balance for the year).

specific objectives (for operational programs of each year). This should be linked to EAPN Europe's Strategic Plan.

2. Annual Work Programme, clearly based on and linked to the National Network's Strategic Plan.
3. Annual Report of the main actions taken and results obtained.

▪ Recommended:

- Established monitoring and evaluation system of the Strategic Plan, and the Operational Programs (with a clear list of measurable indicators).
- For Networks that do not have a Strategic Plan, adapt the EAPN Europe Strategic Plan to your national reality.

○ **Documents**

1. National Network Strategic Plan and current EAPN Strategic Plan.
2. Annual Work Programme (see example of EAPN Work Programme).
3. Annual Report of the National Network, including actions taken and results obtained.
 - Other instruments for strategic planning.
 - Examples of models of annual work programmes.
 - Systems of monitoring and evaluation.

2.4.4 Funding

○ **Why is it important?**

- Resources are essential to carry out actions (even if people collaborate on a voluntary basis). They are also required for sustainable structures that can participate in the civil dialogue between political institutions and NGOs. EAPN National Networks should strive to develop a funding plan, including from public sources at different levels, as well as from private ones.
- To ensure financial sustainability, EAPN National Networks should put in place good financial management systems, including fundraising and reporting, as well as internal checks and balance systems. Attention should be equally divided between fundraising and financial management, as one cannot be achieved without the other.
- As EAPN has set the objective to develop a projects wing, National Networks should aim to develop and improve good financial management and reporting systems towards all their donors, building the credibility of effective use of public and private money for the objectives assumed and opening up opportunities for future project collaboration.
- Good reporting practices should also apply to contracts with EAPN Europe, where each report has an impact on the totality of the EAPN Europe grant, and therefore on the totality of activities that members can carry out together.

○ **How do you do it?**

- Essential:

1. Good management of the use of EAPN Europe funding by the National Network.
2. Annual public and private funding obtained.
3. Annual financial balance sheet attached to the annual activity report.

▪ Recommended:

- Existence of fundraising strategies (including plans for diversification).
- Criteria for cooperation with private bodies and acceptance of private funding.
- Adoption of Principles of Transparency and Good Practice, related to financial issues (please see footnote 2 above).

○ **Documents**

1. Contract signed by NNs with EAPN, and the subsequent financial report of the use of the funds received.
2. List of public and private funds annually obtained.
3. Annual financial balance sheet (models can be developed, in cases where there is no requirement by national legislation).
 - Examples of cooperation agreements with private donors, including foundations and private sector actors.
 - Document of basic criteria for the acceptance of private funding.
 - If existing, official assessment and certificates on Transparency and Good Practice, related to the financial situation of the network.

Internal and/or external economic audits.

3. Implementation process of the MASS⁵

The six phases of implementing the Membership Assistance and Support System

The MASS process has the following implementation steps, explained below in more detail:

1. EXCO decision on the NNs initiating the MASS;
2. Initial communication to the NNs, and self-reflection and assessment phase;
3. Defining terms of reference for a review visit, and forming a Support and Accompaniment Team (SAT);
4. The peer review and capacity building visit;
5. Agreement for implementing changes and follow-up;
6. A moment of recognition of successfully finishing the MASS at the General Assembly or in other space, as identified by the Executive Committee.

Since MASS is intended as a member-led peer review system, the main actors involved are a) the Executive Committee - ensuring adequate allocation of resources, overseeing the whole implementation, taking decisions based on the results, drawing the learning and improving the MASS; b) the Secretariat – ensuring adequate support for the smooth running of the MASS process to both the Network undergoing the process and the Support and Accompaniment Teams (SAT).

3.1 EXCO Decision

The Membership Assessment and Support process would be launched by the Executive Committee, which will decide on up to 4 Networks to initiate the MASS process in any given year. The decision on how to select the Networks is to be defined by the Executive Committee.

3.2 Self reflection and assessment

The NN undergoing the MASS is invited to carry out a self-reflection and assessment process, looking through the essential and recommended criteria listed above, and checking the state of the Network in relation to the four areas of assessment. It is advised that at least three persons (if possible, the full Board or more people with various responsibilities and involvement in the National Network) should carry out this self-reflection and assessment discussion. The Bureau/Executive Committee of the Network should hold at least one meeting to carry out the self-assessment together. If possible, carry out that self-assessment with all the members.

⁵ The MASS system proposed has been drawing on the positive experience of International Planned Parenthood Federation system of membership accreditation, highly valued by its members for the process of learning and change it brings. The IPPF system is accompanied by a detailed governance handbook for its members, called Welcome on Board. For more information, please visit <http://ippf.org/resources/publications/Welcome-Board-governance-handbook>

Expected result of this phase: The NN should draw up a report describing the process, who was involved, and the conclusions reached under each area. Together with this report, the NN should submit all the documents required for the MASS, including annual report, statutes, standing orders, and all other relevant documents, as described above under the four assessment areas.

3.3 Defining terms of reference for the review visit and forming the Support and Accompaniment Team (SAT)

Based on the results of the self-reflection and assessment, the EAPN secretariat should launch the next phase together with representatives of the future Support and Assessment Team (SAT), agreeing with the NN undergoing MASS Terms of Reference for the review visit. The Terms of Reference will draw on the report and the accompanying documents submitted by the NN in the first phase, and should also include the framework of the visit and the areas it should explore. The visit should be conducted by a Support and Accompaniment Team, including 2 representatives of 2 NNs, depending on the areas identified, and a member of the EAPN Secretariat, generally from the Development area. A combination of expertise to select the people who make up the SAT should be used, and, where possible, activists with direct experience of poverty should be involved. The Network undergoing the MASS is advised to hold an internal meeting to prepare the review visit. A meeting or virtual meeting of the SAT members should equally be held to prepare it. This SAT team will also be mentoring the Network in the process of making changes.

Expected result of this phase: The Terms of Reference for the review visit should include meetings with members and activists engaged at different levels within the NNs, and, where possible, meetings with partners or Government representatives, to strengthen the recognition of the role of reliable partner of the NN.

3.4 The peer review and capacity building visit

The Support and Accompaniment Team (SAT) should have a series of dialogues/meetings with the Board, staff (where relevant) and volunteers of the NN undergoing the MASS, and lead discussions based on the results of the self-reflection and assessment. The work of the SAT will be guided by the agreed Terms of Reference. If the NN undergoing the MASS is structured in more levels, then SAT should try to meet members from different levels. Meetings with Government representatives and partners of the NN should only be done in support of strengthening the recognition of the Network and its lobby work.

Expected results of this phase: Report of the SAT to the EAPN EXCO and agreed plan of action for changes. The report should also include identified good practices in the NN that can be shared with other members.

3.5 The agreement of implementing changes and follow-up

The resulting agreement of implementing changes and follow-up should be drawn together with the NN for a period of up to 2 years. It should include an action plan, identifying the areas for improvement and the timeframes for changes, as well as good practices related to any of the four areas of assessment, which can be shared with other members. The NN should take up to 2 years to implement the changes identified during the review visit. If necessary, the SAT would offer support to the NN in that process. At the end of each of the 2 years, the NN should submit evidence of the changes they have made – Annual Report, Strategic Plan and, where agreed, other documents.

The agreement should also include a period of monitoring of 3 additional years, on the assumption that a five year period covers usually two elected terms. Engaging with two Boards would be a good system to ensure that the NN implements the agreed changes. The remaining period of 3 years should be used to monitor if the NN's decision-making structures (including new ones, if elections are held) are continuing to strengthen those aspects identified in the review process.

3.6 A moment of recognition of successfully finishing the MASS

The Executive Committee should define the moment of recognition, whether it is a symbolic acknowledgment during the General Assembly, or this can be developed into a more formal way of recognising members' efforts for constantly improving their structures.

4. Implementation, revision, learning and financial considerations

When developing this proposal, the Task Force has carefully considered the implications it has on other areas of development. These include financial considerations, selection of the Networks undergoing MASS, implications for the enlargement and membership application process, reflection on the knowledge gained through carrying out the MASS, implications for the relations with European Organisation members at national and EU level.

All of these considerations will be submitted to the Executive Subgroup on Membership Development and Support, which primarily responsible for seeing this proposal through adoption and implementation, and for following up on them, along with making the best out of the learning that the MASS brings.