

**Eurocare Bridging the Gap (BtG) Project:
Fourth meeting of Alcohol Policy Network (APN)
Helsinki, 22nd Nov 2006**

Minutes

1. Apologies: The group noted that Cees Goos (who had chaired the previous APN meetings) had sent his apologies.

2. Agenda: Peter Anderson suggested that the meeting should reflect on the BtG project and the lessons learnt for the future Building Capacity project, by discussing each of the project deliverables in turn.

3. Alcohol Policy Network:

- The group believed that the network would be strengthened by building coalitions within countries as well as between them, although it was noted that certain members are better-positioned than others for this. Johann Damgaard Jensen informed the group that the BtG project had helped create a successful national network in Denmark that involved multiple tiers of government officials, NGOs, researchers and prevention workers working together over a number of years. Marion Rackard noted that the project – and in particular the Warsaw conference – had been very useful in bringing together a coalition in Ireland. In contrast, Alicia Rodriguez Martos told the group that the BtG project had initially helped diverse groups to come together in Spain, but that this has run into organisational problems and had dissolved before the end of the project.
- The group noted that collaborations between governmental bodies, NGOs and researchers was often difficult due to their differing needs, but that the APN had generally been very successful in getting the different members to work together and ‘bridging the gap’ between these worlds. It was however noted that there needs to be a greater clarity about the symbiotic relationship between the APN and the NGO-based Eurocare network, given a partial overlap in membership between the two. There was also some disagreement as to how these differing needs related to the message on the (lack of) effectiveness of education: some members felt that this was uncomfortable for NGOs working in the prevention field, while other members felt that this was an inevitable part of challenging people’s beliefs and moving towards an evidence-based coalition supporting effective policies.
- The group noted that while some project outcomes will not be clear for 1-2 years, many APN members had felt that the BtG project had helped their own organisation’s work through increased credibility (Estonia, Norway), media interest (Netherlands) and the ability to coordinate national activities with others (Austria). More generally, several APN members felt that the project had helped spread knowledge in their country on effective policies (Bulgaria, Spain), and had increased the pressure for political action domestically (Bulgaria, UK).
- The group noted that the project had been very successful in its aim of ‘bridging the gap’ between different regions of Europe, with several members from the new EU Member States (EU10) and transitional countries commenting on how the project has helped their work (Bulgaria, Estonia). However, one group member noted that there was still much further work to be done here, as seen in the lack of speakers from the EU10 at the Helsinki conference.

4. Country mapping: Thomas Karlsson and Esa Osterberg presented an update of the work on the country profiles, noting that a scientific publication is likely to be published in Spring 2007. The group noted that several organisations (particularly smaller organisations) had found the burden of this work difficult (particularly when combined with the other work expected of APN members, e.g. translations), but that it was a good platform for further work.

5. Warsaw and Helsinki conferences: It was noted that it was important that the project had started and ended with major events, and that the conferences (as well as the APN) had successfully achieved its aim of helping to share information. As above, it was also noted that the use of the APN to communicate the conference within their own country had led to a broad representation at the conferences, which in turn had helped create coalitions and/or common platforms within several countries (Denmark, Ireland, UK).

6. BtG principles: Peter Anderson informed the group that the revised version of the principles would be available before the end of 2006. While the group felt the principles could have been more actively disseminated, it was noted that some of the intended functions of these principles were superseded by the *Alcohol in Europe* report.

7. Role of culture: It was noted that the puppets were a greater success than the theatre sketches, and that one factor in this was the greater degree of communication between the APN and the conference puppets.

8. Young people's questionnaire: Peter Anderson informed the group that the final report from this work (written by Ann Hope) would be disseminated to the group when it was published in the coming months, but that it was difficult to reflect on this part of the project before this.

9. Advocacy course and manual: Peter Anderson informed the group that two successful courses had been run following the pilot in Bled, and that the manual would be completed in early 2007. The course would then be modified to focus on 'training the trainers' so that it could be cascaded down to a wider audience within each country. The group noted that those attending the course had been very happy on their return and felt that they had learnt a lot, although one member noted that one attendee was unsure how to use all the information they had learnt, and another member noted that the courses needed to be ongoing in order to reach a critical mass of advocates within each country. The group further felt that there was a need to draw up criteria as to who should attend the courses, to ensure both that those from outside the alcohol field felt confident in passing this information on to others, and that only those with low levels of advocacy experience (who could gain most) were involved.

10. Technical visits to new EU member states: Peter Anderson informed the group that the planned mutual learning experience had never really happened as envisaged, but that those countries who were visited were happy with the outcome. One group member from these countries confirmed that these visits had helped their organisation enormously. Peter Anderson further told the group that various delays had meant that the funds for some countries were reallocated to enable funded delegations to attend the Helsinki conference. Group members from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia all noted that this had been very useful in developing relationships with people who would otherwise not have attended the conference, and seemed likely to help future collaborations within each country.

11. Final steps: Peter Anderson informed the group that the project officially ended on 30 Nov, so all reimbursements must be made by this date; he further noted on behalf of the group the gratitude to Paul Whitaker who had been responsible for the financial management of the BtG project. He also told the group that the final project reports would be completed within three months of the project end. The group finally noted their gratitude to Peter Anderson for all his work and leadership in the project, and looked forward to his role in the new project.