Guidance Notes on forming and running a cluster

Context

These notes seek to help EUNIC members form a new cluster and get them started on their way and to help existing clusters with advice on developing a cluster. They start with administrative matters and end with tips on operational activity. They are written in a FAQ format.

What is EUNIC?

EUNIC is a non-profit association and it has a legal status as AISBL under the Belgian law.

EUNIC is a **network**. As with all networks members get out of it what they put in.

The Heads of the EUNIC corporate members will all have their own reasons for joining the network but all share the desire to work together. There is a strategic and operational added value in their network membership. Members benefit from joint events and development of new initiatives, projects and structures. Cooperation and exchange of knowledge and resources within the network helps to enhance members' ability to achieve common goals and results.

EUNIC, to the outside world is **everything** we do: not just the activities we organise together. It is the collective size and expertise of the member organisations, which give us the reputation and influence.

Each EUNIC member has its own independence and brand but as an alliance all members come together to lobby as a single body, to execute joint projects, to learn from each other and to move to similar standards (for instance in teaching centres). Global joint activities should be discussed with the EUNIC Global Office that will report on them to the 'heads'.

In 2011 the 29 EUNIC members from 25 EU member states:

- Have a turnover over €2.5bn

- Have over 2,000 branches in over 130 countries

- Employ over 25,000 staff, including over 7,000 teachers

- Teach over 2,000,000 students a year

- Provide over 8,000,000 language qualifications

How would you describe EUNIC?

- **An active network**: encouraging members to implement shared projects at many levels and to promote European Experience

- **A learning network**: sharing ideas and practices between members

- **A partnering network**; working with partners including the European Commission, the Council of Europe and partners around the world,

- **An advocacy network**; raising the awareness and effectiveness of building cultural relationships between people worldwide and advocating for perception of culture not as a tool but as a goal in itself

Is EUNIC limited to the EU countries?

Membership is indeed limited to organisations based in the EU. However EUNIC members operate in over 130 countries and we now have nearly 70 clusters in more than 50 countries and new clusters are starting monthly. Non-EU national organisations might become associate members of the cluster.

Who are the EUNIC members?

The Association is composed of two categories of members: Full and Associate Members.

Full Members of the Association are national bodies, or legal bodies operating with a certain degree of autonomy at, or on behalf, of a national level, based in a Member State of the European Union engaged in cultural and related activities beyond their national borders.

Full Members are admitted by the unanimous decision of the General Assembly.

Associate Members are organisations, which subscribe to the purposes of the Association but are not eligible for Full Membership.

Associate Members are admitted by the unanimous decision of the General Meeting.

EUNICs' members are listed on the website: www.eunic-online.eu

Who controls EUNIC?

The decision making body is the Heads General Assembly. This comprises the CEOs/Presidents/Secretary General etc of the EUNIC members. It meets twice a year. It sets the strategy, the budget and the rules. The rules include who can be members at heads level and at cluster level.

All clusters need the approval of the Heads (delegated to the EUNIC Global office, which refers exceptions to the Presidency Team) and remain subject to the policies of the Heads. This also refers to membership.

How does EUNIC operate between the Heads meeting?

The heads elect a **Presidency Team** of three from their own members: a president, a first vice president and a second vice president.

The president holds office for one year and is succeeded by the first vice president; the second vice president move to be first vice-president and a new second vice president is elected.

In this way a president would have been on the presidency team for two years and so has time to gain experience in the role before taking office.

The presidency team act as the executive committee between heads meeting.

The **EUNIC Global Office** is the full time team responsible to the President for the running of the network in accordance with the decisions of the Heads.

The EUNIC Global Office leads on relations with the European Commission and other external partners; it ensures the decisions of the heads are implemented; it ensures the smooth running of the network and the flow of information to clusters and externally. It prepares papers and the agenda for the heads meeting to the presidency team. EUNIC Global Office is separate to the EUNIC in Brussels cluster office but both offices work closely together.

What is the Strategy Group?

This is a group of 9 senior managers from EUNIC members. Their role is to advice the presidency team and the Heads on the major issues affecting EUNIC and to make recommendations. The Groups is commissioned by the Heads and will draw on the experience and expertise of colleagues in member organisations and externally. They have no executive authority.

How does each member engage with EUNIC?

Each member has a "focal point"; a senior manager who is responsible for that organisations engagement with EUNIC. If a cluster member wishes to know of their organisations policy to EUNIC they should consult the focal point. In some cases the head is also the focal point.

The EUNIC Global Office has a list of current focal points.

Clusters may have two levels of membership: full and associate

Every member represented at Heads level has the right to nominate a **full** member at cluster level.

If there is no institute in a country for a member then the Head may nominate a representative. In many cases this may be the Embassy/cultural attaché.

In most case the Head requires an active relationship with their representative on EUNIC matters.

Newly forming clusters should ask the appropriate focal points for guidance.

Several members operate in countries without having an office and their views should also be sought. A EUNIC cluster represents the whole of EUNIC and not only those present in a country.

Associate cluster membership category?

This is a category of membership of a EUNIC cluster, which carries neither voting rights nor the right to hold office. It is usually reserved for Embassies where the Head has not nominated them for full membership on their behalf. Sometimes organisations from other European countries may be invited to join as associates, for instance Norway. Switzerland but this works where they are active in the cultural, educational and society fields rather than simply because they are present.

Some cultural attaches/embassies have an active cultural, educational or society programme and these bring a benefit to clusters.

It can be a benefit to have embassy cultural attaches in the associate category. Most clusters recognise that they are normally less able to provide funds or as importantly staff time to help administer projects.

What about the EC embassy/delegation?

EUNIC has a very close and mutually beneficial relationship with the EC.

The EC in Brussels wrote to delegations in June 2007 urging them to work and support EUNIC.

The local EC representative should be invited to attend as an **observer.** In many cases the delegation is an active supporter of EUNIC cluster activity with time, contacts and possibly money, which is often on a competitive basis.

EUNIC is different to the EC's cultural counsellors meeting. We have agreed with the EC, and the new External Action Service that the EUNIC and Cultural Counsellors groups are and need to be separate even if the membership overlaps.

There are five key reasons why the cultural counsellors and EUNIC need to be separate. These are driven by global policy rather than the operations in a single country

1. EUNIC provides advice and lobbies the EC on cultural strategy, etc.

2. We often bid for EC funding and need to be seen as separate to avoid accusations of unfair competition to others bidding. This is of crucial importance and applies world wide not just for an individual country.

3. Many EUNIC members do not take part in the formal diplomatic activity by virtue of their relationship with their appropriate sponsoring ministries. As mentioned above EUNIC members may be active in a country but without a presence; the cluster represents all EUNIC members at heads level.

4. The scope of cultural counsellors led activity (compared for example for discussions on cultural political issues such as intellectual property rights and restitution of cultural objects) tends to be at the lower end of the competencies

and aspirations of the more developed EUNIC clusters. Few cultural counsellors' activities go beyond a parallel showcasing arts event.

5. EUNIC Heads have made it clear at successive meetings that cluster and cluster members need to be accountable to the Heads. This accountability is lost if the EC chair the meetings which include non-EUNIC members.

Other members?

A cluster may invite other organisations as associates or observing members but try not to make the meeting too large!

It may be better to hold an annual "partners" meeting rather than make the cluster too large and cumbersome.

If you want an organisation as a full member who is not represented at heads level you require approval from the Presidency team: contact the EUNIC Global office first.

Paperwork?

A EUNIC cluster needs these items of paperwork:

- The original charter based on the standard cluster charter

- Minutes of the regular meetings recoding decisions recording decision and action points

- A written agreement (a letter, shared email etc) for every activity which details who is responsible for what, who pays etc. This is essential! It does not have to be overly detailed or a quasi contract but clear! It should also cover the procedure if there is a cost overrun!

- A short agreement on key processes to ensure smooth running of the cluster. These should not exceed two pages and are there to clarify topics such as election procedure, decision making. They should be as succinct; do not get sidetracked into lengthy quasi-legal documents.

Legal status?

Clusters often think they need a legal status.

In many countries of the world there is not an appropriate legal entity within local law. EUNIC members' own status in a country can cause problems to sign into a local legal entity (notably those whose status depends on a diplomatic basis).

A EUNIC legal entity in itself is unlikely to qualify to meet EC criteria for bidding. The advice is that if a cluster wishes to bid for a EC grant then it needs to involve the head offices of members who have the expertise in bidding; and for one member to be the contracting and lead agency as they will have the financial and management capacity to run an EC project. Newcomers who have not managed such a project are strongly advised to consult with a colleague who has; from bidding to evaluation to audit.

If a cluster considers it is essential for its work to have a legal personality, it must apply to the Heads with supporting arguments and be authorised to do so by the General Assembly.

But won't we need a legal status to bid for EC funding?

Yes but it is most unlikely that a EUNIC legal entity will ever have the track record to qualify to bid for EC funds. The EUNIC entity does not inherit the financial and business strength of its members; only what it does itself.

It is far more effective for one member to be the "Contracting party", the lead bidder with other members as part of the consortium.

Membership fee?

Most clusters do not have a membership fee as the administrative hassle of keeping it outweighs the benefits.

If the cluster needs to spend something then everyone chips in when required (ex. to hire an intern for a short period; to help send a representative to a regional meeting etc).

President, vice president?

Every cluster must have a president/head of cluster. Normally the post is held for a year after a ballot of full members. Some clusters also elect a vice president and second vice president, who can stand in and succeed as president so has a years' experience.

It is rare that a newly arrived director becomes president: give them a chance to settle in the new country!

It is a **persona**l and not institutional appointment.

If the person leaves then either the VP succeeds for the remainder of the term, plus their own term or there is a new election (make it clear in the charter or the minutes of an early meeting, don't leave it until it happens).

Each cluster may decide its own procedures for election but these must be open and transparent.

Support?

Normally the institute of the cluster president carries most of the administration. Rotating minute taking and hosting meetings (see below) lessens the burden but make sure there is a central set which can he handed on to the next president.

Increasingly clusters are using interns at busy times of the year: a good opportunity for a MA student or someone studying at a teaching centre. Either one member offers to pay the small costs or there is a general chip in for support. Intern arrangements should conform to the best practice in the country.

The intern often keeps communications going, keeps the website up to date, the EUNIC Global Office up to date and helps with the administration of project activity. Clusters are increasingly developing their own newsletter.

Languages?

General Assemblies, the website and internal written communications will be in English.

Translation into languages other than English is the responsibility of EUNIC clusters and member organisations. The translation of the EUNIC website materials into other languages is also a voluntary contribution from the member organisations. The same principle applies to interpretation at meetings.

EUNIC regional meetings, clusters and working groups may determine their own working languages.

Website?

EUNIC has its own website. www.eunic-online.eu

It is important for EUNIC generally that it is kept up to date. Every cluster can have its own pages. These can be in your local language (but an English translation should be sent to EUNIC Global Office as well).

You may also develop your own: several clusters have. We will link from the main site. EUNIC Global office is working on the development of the new website structure, which will give clusters the opportunity to develop easily their own sub-websites that can be managed and updated by themselves.

Visual identity

There is a standard logo and advice on how to use the EUNIC brand material (font, logo, colours, etc.). The EUNIC Global Office provides advice on visual identity.

What does the cluster president do?

The cluster president's main role is to facilitate the development of the cluster; it is a leadership not directorial role. When acting as president the person is expected to represent the cluster and not the interests of their own organisation.

A range of tasks, which may be shared out of course:

- Is a facilitator and enthusiast for more partnerships
- Convenes and chairs the meetings, seeks consensus
- Ensures all members are engaged
- Ensures EUNIC corporate members who are not represented in the country cluster but still work in the country are kept up to date
- Acts as the spokesperson at events
- Encourages learning from other clusters and projects
- Encourages staff exchanges, shared training
- Maintains good relations with EC representation/delegation on behalf of all members

There are administrative tasks as well:

- Ensures minutes are up to date, that agreements are clear
- Ensures the website is up to date
- Ensures the EUNIC Global Office is kept up to date with cluster membership changes, with contact details and that the EUNIC website is kept up to date
- Attends the annual regional meeting, or sends alternate, and ensures members are kept up to date
- Hands over the "corporate EUNIC memory" to successor
- Ensures EUNIC newsletters are circulated to members

What do EUNIC clusters do?

A selection of ideas to get you started:

- Meet monthly. This keeps the momentum going.

- Rotate location of meetings each month: ensures all join in and shares the chore of minutes taking if the host also takes minutes

- Start a planning year by sharing what all members intend to do in the following year and then see commonalities to work together: work on same festivals, same topics, etc.

- Try not to treat EUNIC as an add-on but as part of increasing your own impact. This is perhaps the most important culture to develop. EUNIC is not the "additional event"

- Include the obvious European events such as Day of Languages, Capitals of Culture, etc.

- Review the website etc for ideas from other clusters: look for "common themes, local delivery"

- Ask the EC representation what their objectives are and see if they have suitable funding opportunities: for ex. Project around climate change with students; HIV awareness with artists; civil society development within the cultural sector

- Don't forget the teaching centres and teacher training. Languages are a major part of EUNIC members' activity and within the network there are many opportunities to work together: teacher training; sharing professional standards, joint marketing, even joint bidding for corporate clients wanting a multi-lingual package.

- Try not to focus too much on "parallel arts events" such as film festivals etc unless a host country partner seeks them from you. If you do a film festival then see if it can be themed: on migration; on climate change, etc. Always try to bring out speakers to run debates etc not just the films.

- It only takes three members to join an event to enable it to be classed EUNIC: this gives plenty of scope as there is no need for everyone to join in everything or to hold back three members wishing to work together.

- See what activities your members are planning anyway: if often shows that there are many where there is already a degree of working together.

- Make sure you keep the EUNIC Global Office up-to-date with news of future events and reports of previous ones for the website and for the Annual Report to the Heads.

- Keep the EUNIC Global Office informed of changes to the cluster especially the new president so we don't lose touch!

- EUNIC holds regional meetings for clusters. Make sure someone attends; it does not have to be the president and if possible everyone chip in to share the costs.

- Put the EUNIC logo on all your websites and indeed business cards and termly/monthly newsletters "We are members of the EUNIC network".

- As well as the arts and language activities try to run one debate/seminar a year on a suitable topic with a local partner.

- Share training programmes; most established clusters say a key benefit of EUNIC networking is learning from each other.

- Start a newsletter to all your contacts (check contacts don't get multiple copies).

- Use the cluster development framework (see the annex) as a guide

- Propose cluster meetings with clusters in neighbouring countries to share ideas.

More information

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