

ENAT President's Address, Annual General Assembly, Online, 23.6.2021

Dear Friends,

It happened again! This is the second year that, due to the persistence of the pandemic of Covid 19, the Annual General Assembly is held online.

Like last year, our meeting and the decisions we will vote on together have their validity granted by the provisions of the Belgian law.

Having clarified this issue, the points I would like to tackle are:

1. Financial results and COVID Pandemic effects on Tourism and Accessible Tourism
2. Sources of income for the Network
3. International relationships
4. Tourism and accessible tourism perspectives after the pandemic
5. Priorities for the next programming period

Financial results

Our accounts for 2020 show that also this year we closed our accounts with a positive result of € 3.824,84

I am really pleased since this result has been obtained despite the waiver of one year of the membership fees that was approved last year due to the negative economic influence of the pandemic on SMEs and many other ENAT members.

As a consequence of the different lock downs which were declared in most world countries, we had to block any travel, both institutional as well as those related to the meetings planned in EU funded projects. This fact, negative per se, from a relational and social point of view, had however a positive effect on our accounts.

Our revenues thus come mainly from EU funded projects and the part of their budget which is not considered as staff costs (overheads and any other lump sum in the budget attribution).

I should like to reconfirm that ENAT applies a fee of 3% on any revenue that members will obtain from any contracts signed by ENAT for activities to be developed in any funded activity. This applies to, for example, training, consulting, speakers' fees, experts' consulting on behalf of ENAT, etc. For EU-funded projects we do not apply this rule, as EU programmes are either fully financed and/or have a provision for organisations' overheads or administration costs.

The crisis generated by the COVID, which we expected to be over at the end of 2020 is still producing its negative effects on Tourism activities in Europe and the rest of the world. The lockdown applied in many EU member states is being released slowly and in the recent months, due to the beneficial effects of intensive vaccination campaigns in all countries. But the economy is still to be re-launched and the risks of poverty and unemployment are still to be overcome.

The European Union has decided about the provision of substantial funds for the campaign called New Generation EU which will be distributed to all member states according to very detailed plans for recovery.

We, as ENAT, must continue to monitor with a lot of attention all the possible funds that might be allocated in order to identify those budget lines which might be used to help "Accessible tourism" not to be left out of the European economic efforts.

But, first of all, we have to help and sustain our own members and our association. Thus, for the second year, I am pleased to announce that the Board has decided to present to the AGA the proposal to waive some of the membership fees again for 2021.

As in 2020, this facility will be available for private companies with less than 250 employees, self-employed and individual members only.

Fortunately, thanks to project work and in-kind contributions of our members, the financial situation of ENAT allows us again to reduce our income without either endangering our economic situation or present a negative result in next year's financial accounts.

I am happy to say that the Full Members participants to the AGA approved this motion unanimously.

This measure approved last year produced quite an important effect on the number of our members, which rose to 222. We hope that, also this year, we will have a similar positive effect and that the improvements and the realisation of part of our goals, as detailed in our programme for the next 4 year period, will induce all our members to renew their membership, once the payment of the fee will be re-introduced. We have calculated that the value of the fee waiver in 2020, reached the amount of € 37.350,00.

This was largely due to the increased number of memberships.

I believe that by offering free membership in this period, COVID-19 may even help us reach many more people and organisations and spread our message more effectively. I hope that this will give ENAT an even greater global impact in the future.

We will continue to promote new applications for membership, and we welcome applications for full membership, having already simplified the approval procedures and opening the possibility of full membership to organisations outside Europe.

Sources of income for the Network

As noted by the Accountant, we had several ongoing and finalised European Union funded projects which contributed to our activities in 2020.

We are currently working with 4 active projects with a total budget allocation to ENAT of € 423.578,00 running until 2023.

We have filed additional project applications in 2020, with a total budget of about € 244.000 but the evaluation will be delayed since many calls for proposals were also postponed due to COVID.

The ENAT Working Group on European project proposals is continuing to evaluate relevant Calls and decides if the subject of the proposal and fellow applicants are suitable for ENAT, also considering our expertise and the need to maintain our reputation in delivering high quality work in EU funded projects.

This working group's participants are myself, Ivor Ambrose, Marco Pizzio and Emiliano Deferrari with other members who might be involved, case by case. I will consider another permanent member represented by Katerina Papamichail, full member of ENAT and very attentive to all the opportunities offered by EU funds.

Regardless of the particular situation we are in, due to the fee waiver decisions taken, the second major source of income is the membership fees. We all know, however, that counting only on the contribution of the members is not enough to allow us to survive, once the fixed costs have been guaranteed: the administration costs, the registration of the annual report cost and the annual compensation for our Managing Director. This year, we have also appointed a membership secretary to handle new memberships and manage member communications, and we fully expect that this will bring more income to the association from fee payments, this year and in the long-term.

Consequently, as I said many times, we have to continue to consider, and look for, financial support from all possible sponsors or from any international

body, either European or also outside Europe in order maintain our association and extend our reach.

International relationships

Our main focus, at international level, is to involve the relevant stakeholders to promote our concepts and goals in Europe and internationally.

1. The cooperation with the UN World Tourism Organisation and ONCE Foundation has been renewed for another 4 year period. The MoU provides a lot of benefits in the promotion of our work towards WTO Member States. The joint work will continue to focus on the promotion of good practices during the current crisis, the application of standards, the measurement of accessible tourism, as well as labour inclusion and institutional disability inclusive policies. The three partners are currently collecting “success stories” of destinations and companies which have adopted new sanitary protocols to facilitate access to travel and tourism for all, including both residents and visitors, and I would strongly encourage you to submit your examples of good practice in this area.
2. The **ISO Working Group 14 on "Accessible Tourism for All"**, established under ISO Technical Committee 228 Tourism Services, has worked for the past 3 years on a new Standard on Tourism for All, where ENAT, represented by Ivor Ambrose and Katerina Papamichail, acts as a “Liaison Organisation”. The working group has finalised its work and the ISO Standard has just been approved for publication.
3. The **ENAT NTOs' Learning Group** is now strongly consolidated after the initial meetings in 2016, 17 and 18. The NTO learning group is an important asset that helps to attract members from outside Europe, as I mentioned before, who are always very interested in learning and comparing their experience with the European ones. The pandemic

forced the Learning Group to work online but, with the new positive situation of openings we hope to be able to organise a face-to-face meeting within the year or in the first months of 2022.

This afternoon, some members of the Learning Group will take part in an online Expert Panel to discuss COVID-19 issues with ENAT members.

4. We still participate in the **EU Joint Programming Initiative More Years Better Lives** which deals with all aspects related to the correct, positive and satisfactory inclusion of older people in all the different societal scenarios.
5. We are members of the **Health Tourism Policy and Strategy**. Their activities are being resumed after the long interval of the pandemic. We will continue to make sure that all the issues related to accessible tourism are duly taken into consideration.
6. Through the **European Manifesto on Tourism for Growth and Jobs**, ENAT has made its voice heard in all the main issues related to tourism and accessible tourism and in all commentaries that the Manifesto produced, in particular when addressing the European Commission on all matters related to the re-launch of the Tourism sector after Covid 19.
7. This year (although not part of the 2020 report) I can mention that ENAT has been accepted as an official partner of the **New European Bauhaus** initiative, managed by the EC Joint Research Centre under the direction of EU President, Ursula Von der Leyen. We intend to raise the issue of accessibility of buildings and environments for all, especially in tourism settings and destinations – a subject which is

closely aligned with the initiative's focus on creating sustainable, beautiful and inclusive environments.

Next programming period

The Strategic Plan 2020-2024 is under revision, as we see that coming out of the COVID-19 will take more months and possibly years. The following are some ideas and proposals along which the Plan should be developed.

We will discuss them in depth in the Board meeting tomorrow 24 June.

- We will give priority to supporting our members with the fee waiver in 2021 for Individuals and SMEs (although members may pay if they wish)
- We will support members by continuing to offer the free online training courses, available through the ENAT website.
- In 2021 - 2023 we continue our work on developing new training courses and learning materials in EU-funded projects.
- We are seeking EU funding for new projects in the areas of accessibility in the aviation sector, new technologies for deaf travellers, and training for staff in tourism and hospitality in more European regions, countries (and languages).
- We are exploring possibilities for generating income to finance more activities: e.g. enhancing Pantou - the Accessible Tourism Directory, to make it more attractive and also ensure the reliability of the participating accessibility schemes.
- We are watching for the opportunity to re-start the World Tourism for All Quality Programme, which was suspended due to COVID-19
- We will continue sharing information in the NTOs' Learning Group

- Finally, we aim to have a closer cooperation with the ENAT national contact points and discuss with them how to support their activities and increase their impact.

The new Plan is a major challenge for all of us. The board members and the Full Members will be directly involved as we will need the support of everyone to achieve such ambitious goals.

Only through an active cooperation of each of us, we may be sure to keep our European and international positioning and increase the value of the concepts we support worldwide.

We have continued, and will go on to consult the Board very frequently, through online meetings. This is a system that proved very efficient and allowed all of us to be constantly in touch and helped solve many problems.

Finally let me thank all of you for being here and, as usual, a very special thank you, must go to Ivor Ambrose for his continuous commitment to support the organisation at every level. Without his presence and hard work we would not have achieved the position we hold today.

Thank you.