

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

7<sup>th</sup> May 2019

14.00-18.00

Barcelona, Spain

### Participants :

**Daniel ALVAREZ**, Isadora Duncan (ES)

**Jean-Bernard AUDUREAU**, Vice-President,  
ASGECO (ES)

**Natalia BERAZA**, FIAPAS (ES)

**Norma BERNAD**, UNAF (ES)

**Evelyne BERNARD**, CSF (FR)

**Marie-Agnès BESNARD**, Familles Rurales  
(FR)

**Chantal BRUNO**, COFACE-Disability  
Platform, APF (FR)

**Christophe COCU**, Ligue des Familles (BE)

**Carmen DE LAMO**, FIAPAS (ES)

**Eric DE WASCH**, Gezinsbond (BE)

**Annemie DRIESKENS**, President, Gezinsbond  
(BE)

**Virginie DURIN**, Treasurer, Familles de  
France (FR)

**Carmen FLORES**, FAMS (ES)

**Peter GRABNER**, Family Initiative (SI)

**Sylvie HIRTZ**, COFACE-Disability Platform,  
APEMH (LU)

**Kinga JOO**, NOE (HU)

**Bénédicte KAIL**, APF (FR)

**Katalin KARDOSNE GYURKO**, NOE (HU)

**Joyce KNAPPE**, Pro Parents (NL)

**Elisabeth LAMMERS**, UNAPEI (FR)

**Eleni MARAVELIA**, NELFA (EU)

**Mariela MODEVA**, WMAV (BG)

**Anna NAGY**, Single Parents Association (HU)

**Renata OUREDNIKOVA**, Women For  
Women (CZ)

**Anne PAYNE**, ICA (IE)

**Elisabeth POTZINGER**, KFÖ (AT)

**Mériadec RIVIÈRE**, UNAF (FR)

**Gaetano SANTONOCITO**, AIAS (IT)

**Dimitris STAMOULIS**, ASPE (EL)

**Silvija STANIC**, Step By Step (HR)

**Antonia TORRENS**, Vice-President, KMOP  
(EL)

### Secretariat:

**Liz GOSME**, Director

**Irene BERTANA**, Policy and Advocacy  
Officer

**Florian CHARRON**, Senior Project and  
Finance manager

**Pascual MARTINEZ**, Policy and Advocacy  
Officer

**Martin SCHMALZRIED**, Policy and  
Advocacy Manager

**Isabell WUTZ**, Communication Officer

### Excused:

**Pierre CERNESSON**, Financial Adviser

**Anna Maria COMITO**, CoFaAs clelia (IT)

**Sven IVERSEN**, AGF (DE)

**Eija KOIVURANTA**, Vaestoliitto (FI)

**Elvira MENDEZ**, Salud Y Familia

**Gonçalo SOLLA**, Fundação LIGA (PT)

**Stanislas TRNOVEC**, Club of Large Families  
(SK)

**Ivana TYKAC**, Women For Women (CZ)

## 1. Welcome and introduction by the President

Annemie Drieskens opens the General Assembly at 14.00. A round table of introductions is then organised.

Special welcome to new members FAMS and FIAPAS from Spain and supporting members Nelfa and Pro Parents. Apologies from certain members who could not attend the GA for different reasons: Pierre Cernesson (Financial Adviser), Anna Maria Comito (CoFaAs clelia, Italy), Sven Iversen (AGF, Germany), Eija Koivuranta (Vaestoliitto, Finland), Elvira Mendez (Salud Y Familia, Spain), Gonçalo Solla (Fundação LIGA, Portugal), Stanislas Trnovec (Club of Large Families, Slovakia), Ivana Tykac (Women For Women, Czech Republic).

She refers to the meeting the network had in Salud Y Familia premises and thank their representatives for the collaboration, and especially Elvira Mendez. She mentions the annual report 2018 and especially the achievement EU work-life balance directive. She thanks the members for their involvement in the process. All together we really achieved a milestone for the families.

All members are working hard as reflected in the monthly newsletter ! She says that we are currently witnessing in the EU a certain pressure on family organisations, and civil society, especially regarding finances. She thanks the members and the team for the work managed in 2018. She announces that the agreement with the Commission for 2019 was (finally!) signed and refers to the letter of the European Commission which has accepted our work programme 2019 and mentioned the overall good quality of it.

2019 is a year with National elections in different countries and upcoming European elections. She invites the members to actively participate in the preparation of COFACE workplan 2020 and discuss how to reinforce, and enlarge our COFACE network.

## 2. Agenda and Minutes

- Adoption of the Agenda and of the Minutes of the last GA 2018

Florian Charron announces that no comment was sent regarding the agenda and the draft minutes.

**The agenda and the minutes are then adopted without any change.**

## 3. Membership strategy and update.

Liz Gosme provides an update on internal discussions about the COFACE membership strategy. There have been many requests for membership information from different types of organisations across Europe, but the main barrier to joining is the annual membership fee. The Membership system was already made more fair for smaller organisations (following a decision of the AC in 2018), and the Network Committee and Executive Buro are working on finding solutions to bring in new member organisations. In the AC meeting (just before the GA), she presented a mapping of family organisations across different EU countries, and the idea is to invite some of these organisations to the open conference in Helsinki on 3-4<sup>th</sup> October.

Annemie Drieskens asked the members of the General Assembly to provide the Secretariat with the names of the people in their organisation in charge of the topics at the COFACE agenda, president and communication officers in their organisation in order to work more efficiently, and connect the members more with the COFACE network with the ambition to e.g. delegating different experts on

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disability, worklife balance, consumer policy, digitalisation and more. She also invites the members to the next meeting of the COFACE-Disability Platform in Luxembourg, an opportunity to delegate experts on disability or family carers to participate.

## 4. Activity Report 2018

### *- Presentation of the annual report 2018 – for adoption*

Liz Gosme congratulates the members for the mobilization and the achievements managed during 2018-2019. She presents the annual report by referring to the different key events we had during the year : the meeting on digitalisation in Sofia, the expert meeting on worklife balance in Paris, the COFACE Disability meeting in Sitges, the conference in Graz under the Austrian presidency and the great cooperation with different members for each event. She says that many lessons were learned in relation to EU law-making, the power of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, the importance of joint working of COFACE across EU capitals in order to secure an agreement on the EU worklife balance directive. She mentions that COFACE has tasked an independent evaluator (Dominique Danau) to evaluate the impact of this EU directive on COFACE members and the network in general. She is glad to say that after the Economics seminar some people are now talking about finance at the service of the society, so that our common work is already having an impact.

### **Remarks:**

Annemie Drieskens thanks Liz Gosme for her presentation, Isabell for work and members for involvement. She mentions the new deal on childcare - the next step after the WLB directive. She reminds that we were sharing a session with our local member Salud Y Familia, and that learning more about local situations and ongoing actions is always a good combination with our statutory meetings and this should be continued.

**The annual report 2018 is acknowledged by the GA members, and adopted by unanimity.**

### *- Financial report: balance and results 2018 – for adoption*

#### *a) Presentation Florian Charron, Senior Finances and Projects Manager*

Florian Charron presents the accounts 2018.

First of all, he thanks the whole network for their contribution in terms of incomes and co-financing.

He details the results to the members, column per column and gives an overview about the financial year compared to the budget planned.

He explains the different steps, the monthly work between the finance manager and the accountant, the external audit, the internal audit, the publication of the accounts at the “Banque Nationale de Belgique”, the financial EASI report submitted to the European Commission.

He mentions the positive result of the 2018 accounts emphasizing that the level of funding from membership contributions is going into the right direction and the good amount obtained through the external contribution.

*b) Report of Pierre Cernesson, Financial Adviser*

In the absence of Pierre Cernesson, Florian Charron presents the audit report by quoting what the financial adviser wrote (see the document).

**Remarks:**

Liz Gosme recalls that the 20% co-financing are not obvious to achieve. She reminds the importance of mobilization of all members around this financial objective. She lists the different ways to ensure co-financing. She thanks the staff and the network for all their efforts to ensure this positive result. She also recalls the delays of payment of the first prefinancing 2019, which puts lots of the European networks like COFACE in difficult conditions. We may have to postpone some expenditures for the beginning of 2020, but in any case the payment of membership fees first thing in the year is very helpful.

Annemie Drieskens proposes to highlight the problem of the very long delay of the payment of the European Commission and ask for a constructive dialogue to avoid this next year and find solutions.

Eric De Wasch says that this situation is not new. Some years ago some European networks had to even send to some staff members their letter of resignation. COFACE had to plan this as well, but without doing it at the end.

Silvija Stanic reminds that she also had some experiences about delay in Croatia and that she also had to take a loan as Step by Step was waiting some financial feedbacks from the local authorities and the government.

Elisabeth Potzinger adds that these delays are happening in all member states. She is mentioning the “Garlic project” with the Roma people. The provincial of Minister Affairs told that they needed to cut some expenses at one point and that KFÖ had to reduce the working time of one policy officer. Today they got the positive news that the Minister gave the green light regarding the budget for the project and they can continue the works the way it used to be.

Annemie Drieskens mentions that the new European Commission will be nominated in few months and that we should adopt a strategy in order to avoid the delay issue for the next year. She reminds that, despite the quadrennial contract passed with the European Commission, we need to send every year in September our work programme and proposed budget to obtain the EaSI funds.

There are few questions about the level of co-financing (80-20%), one about the presentation of the table in itself (with a request to add another column regarding the results of the year before), and also one regarding the presentation of the balance of the year in a more practical and easy way than the one under the BNB framework.

Florian Charron replies to the pending questions and will take care of the changes needed for the next year in terms of presentation.

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**The General Assembly votes, and the accounts are approved by unanimity.**

**The 2018 results are approved with a surplus.**

**Discharge is given to the AC and the Financial Adviser by unanimity.**

**The vote to allocate the positive result to the reported results is also approved unanimously.**

## **5. European Elections: COFACE “Call to action” and national actions of members**

Discussion and exchange.

Isabell Wutz presents the call to action for the European elections.

She presents the process of the elections that will be held on 23-26 May in every Member State (incl. UK). The elections only happen every 5 years and 751 MEPs will be elected this time. She reminds that this is the only directly elected body of the EU by EU-citizens and that the European Parliament debates and approves new legislation for the EU. The newly elected parliament will vote for the next European Commission president & European Parliament president.

The #AllFamiliesSpeakOut campaign is a Social Media campaign to raise awareness and share information about the upcoming European Elections that was launched in February 2019 after various internal discussions in 2018. COFACE Families Europe wants to mobilise voters locally. We call to our European network and to friends to vote in May 2019 using 10 key values as a compass. . The logo of the #AllFamiliesSpeakOut is a circle with our 10 principles. The circle is from the Call to Action which can be used as a compass for the voters. We want to see a European Parliament with MEPs who support all principles.

She presents the different actions that already happened and that will happen until the European election. The next important one will be on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May - International Day of Families. On this occasion, COFACE Families Europe will issue a press release and a video.

She also presents the different infographics created with Arianna Giorgi, our former trainee on this occasion. She mentions the quiz, the social media cards, the video for the election, and presents a proposal for a common video to be developed with COFACE members for the end of the year.

### **Remarks:**

Liz Gosme adds that COFACE will continue to advocate and lobby to prepare something strong with the new European Parliament and the European Commission.

Elisabeth Potzinger thinks that for the press release on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May we should add “family friendly Europe”. Could we have it translated in German for the 13<sup>th</sup> of May?

Evelyne Bernard and Meriadec Rivière say that the message in the video regarding paternity leave is not really working. It is already 11 days in France, and not the 10 like mentioned in the video. It would be useful to amend the video slightly in order to make it relevant in France as well.

Annemie Driekens thinks we should insist on the fact that thanks to Europe paternity leave can be taken in all countries and not mention/focus on the number of days that can be taken.

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Meriadec Rivière also adds that this video is coming a bit later regarding the campaign. He mentions that in France citizens do not really have the appetite to vote (46% only want to vote, according to the polls). The attention of the media was really focused those last days and weeks on Notre-Dame-de-Paris burning and the yellow jackets crisis.

Annemie Drieskens encourages the members to use the call to action, available in 10 languages! and mobilise their members to go and vote! She opens the floor and asks who is involved / has the intention to be in the election campaign?

Elisabeth Lammers specifies that in France persons with disabilities can vote since the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2019. It is only 19 days from the elections. The media have little interest unfortunately. UNAPEI wants to make easy-to-read manifestos for persons with disabilities. They want to prepare accessible information and their main activity about this is an awareness raising campaign managed at local level.

Bénédicte Kail says APF is member of a collective platform untitled "for a united Europe".

Regarding the video on work-life balance, Anna Nagy thinks it is a fresh and good approach to target families.

Joyce Knappe reminds that men also want to share more responsibilities so this video is a very interesting tool to be used. In the Netherlands the European elections campaign is already all over the media.

Annemie Drieskens says that the images in the video are very good and we could just adapt the text to make it relevant for all countries.

Evelyne Bernard thinks that we could make a connection with the health of children / families and air pollution. A small video on the environment at European level seems an interesting other point. She will send a press release soon about consumption.

Isabell Wutz asks the members to not forget to use the hashtag #AllFamiliesSpeakOut on social media.

Liz Gosme reminds that the idea is to use the video not only for the European elections, but also after the elections in order to boost the implementation of the EU WLB directive.

Concerning Isabell's idea of a common video with the COFACE members, Annemie Drieskens proposes to think about launching a video about the well-being of children in different countries for the Helsinki conference.



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## **6. Activities 2019: COFACE activities and update on EU developments**

For discussion.

Liz Gosme presents the activities 2019 for the next semester, and especially the meetings coming in Luxembourg, Helsinki and Athens. She invites the members to come to the COFACE-Disability platform meeting in Luxembourg and presents the detailed agenda. She also presents the draft programme of the Helsinki conference, co-organised with Vaestoliitto and that will be supported by the Finnish Presidency. She also introduces the event that will take place in Athens on 20-21st November, an expert meeting on digital parenting, with KMOP (World Children's Day). COFACE will talk about how families need to deal with the digital world. The aim is to produce a compendium on Digital Families by end 2019, and the meeting in Athens will also be the opportunity to prepare together the pilot for the Digital Family Lab.

Annemie Drieskens adds that we all should consider to put more focus on the SDGs Agenda 2030 and link our common actions and national activities to different SDG's.

Antonia Torrens will be the contact person for the Digital Family Lab. There is a lot of info that can be shared through this Digital Family Lab. She launches a call to members to be involved in this process and express interest in participation in the 2020 Pilot (which was discussed in the AC).

## **7. Work plan and budget 2020: Discussion in thematic groups**

Annemie Drieskens and Liz Gosme are going through the planned programme for 2020 (see the document). Liz Gosme would like to rethink the newsletter: its format, the frequency in order to launch something fresh for the new decade.

### **Remarks:**

Dimitris Stamoulis thinks COFACE should issue a policy position on energy poverty. Many members are interested in the topic.

Daniel Alvarez proposes that COFACE develop a European prize linked to the TOYS & diversity campaign.

### **The vote takes place and the work programme and the budget for 2020 are adopted.**

The GA is then separated in different working islands, with topics of the workplan 2020 such as families on-line, migration, disability and health, one parent families and communication, to brainstorm on concrete priorities/actions.

After the discussions, the chair of every group present the results of the talking:

### ***Families off line / on line:***

Silvija Stanic: in her group they recognize the huge influence internet has not only on children but also on teachers, parents and grandparents and the importance of media-literacy. They also talked about how to use internet and social media for the EU elections. By using messages in a funny way, they think COFACE could reach the audience much more than with booklets, brochures, manifestos, etc.

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### ***Migration:***

Dimitris Stamoulis: in his group they have identified 2 types of migration, internal or external to the EU. In both cases, when people travel within the EU, mainly for financial reasons, it is the local government which is putting lots of efforts for integration. Considering the rights of refugees, we need to respect the international rules. The EU is not big enough to accept all the people. We need to have some criteria that should apply to the whole of Europe. The European Union should increase the aid to developing countries. He reminds that migrants are coming and Greeks are leaving to find job elsewhere. This is not a sustainable situation. We have to treat people equally. He reminds that some families gave their entire money to arrive on the European land which is finally not the promised paradise. Some people who are living and working in other countries should receive some help to go back to their families once a month.

### ***Disability group & health:***

Anne Payne: in her group they emphasized the fact that COFACE needs to talk more about the well-being of young persons with disabilities, and the cut in benefits when children reach adult age. Other topics mentioned by this group as important were parenthood of persons with disabilities, and the cuts in health budgets affecting persons with disabilities.

### ***One parent families group:***

Anna Nagy: in her group they were really focusing on the importance of sharing experiences in order to learn from each other. The inspiring practices found in one-parent family organisations of COFACE member organisations are considered really valuable and important to share.

### ***Communication:***

Isabell Wutz mentions that in her group they quickly shared best practices about communication, newsletter, on-line / off line campaign, social media, etc. Elisabeth Lammers especially mentions the importance of the videos, pictures and the use of Instagram to be visible on internet. There were also ideas mentioned on mainstreaming accessibility concerns in COFACE's communications strategy.

Annemie Drieskens thanks the members for their active participation and input and also the translators who helped us to have a good debate and closes the meeting at 18.00.