

A photograph of three women celebrating. They are holding their hands out, releasing a shower of colorful confetti. The woman on the left is smiling broadly, the woman in the middle is looking directly at the camera, and the woman on the right is blowing a kiss. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white, suggesting an outdoor evening event.

EANPC
50 Years

50 Years EANPC

European Association of National
Productivity Centres

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Youngoldman

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50 Years EANPC 1966 – 2016

Anniversaries can be useful events. They allow us to celebrate the past – and particularly our past achievements. They also, of course, allow us to reflect on disappointments and missed opportunities. Reflecting on the past also serves as a useful platform on which to consider the future. Learning from the past – from the good and the bad – helps us make fewer mistakes in the future – and recognize – and exploit – future opportunities.

This brochure is our attempt to reflect on the past – as we celebrate 50 years of supporting European productivity – and move towards a consideration of our future.

John Heap, President, EANPC

 EANPC
50 Years

EANPC and National Productivity Centres

EANPC is a network of productivity centres and agencies. Initially, as our name suggests, these were national productivity centres – part of, or sponsored by, national government.

What Is a National Productivity Centre?

The establishment of National Productivity Centres (NPCs) in European countries goes back to the channelling of US aid after World War Two into a drive to increase productivity in the war-devastated countries of Western Europe. It was felt that, in order to accelerate postwar economic recovery, the annual rate of increase in labour productivity of Western European industry should match that of the USA.

In 1948, the administrators of the European Recovery Programme, or ERP - better known as the Marshall Plan - launched a new programme, the United States Technical Assistance and Productivity Programme which “intended to introduce American-style business practices into Western Europe.”^[01] This programme, commonly named the Technical Assistance Programme or TA, facilitated a productivity drive supervised by the ERP’s administrative agency ECA (Economic Cooperation Administration).

An important step was the establishment of NPCs in each participating country:

“European governments were required to create National Productivity Centers, or NPCs, and to promote the spread of ‘free enterprise’ and its practices in civilian industries, particularly through the exclusion of communist trade unions, or else face a forfeit of further ERP funds. By the autumn of 1950, the ECA had pushed eleven of sixteen ERP recipient countries to create NPCs and prohibit ERP production assistance to industries which maintained communist unions.”^[02]

To co-ordinate these efforts, a European Productivity Agency (EPA) was established in May 1953. By constructing a network of NPCs, the EPA - located within the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC; since 1961: OECD) - played a “key role in organising this productivity drive between 1953 and 1962”^[03].

Its task was, following the EPA’s Second Programme of Action, “to stimulate productivity, and thereby raise European standards of living, by influencing not only Governments but also industrial, agricultural and research organisations, private and collective enterprises and public services. One of its primary aims is to convince management and workers alike of the benefits of productivity and to enlist their co-operation.”^[04]

After the EPA was disbanded in 1961 the heads of the existing NPCs decided to continue co-operation under the umbrella of an independent body which became in 1966 the European Association of National Productivity Centres. It was established with the broad purpose - which it still retains – of increasing the exchange of information relating to productivity development and facilitating co-operation among its member organisations.

EANPC – a unique association

Around the globe, there are many professional and academic organisations addressing productivity issues. The unique EANPC approach to productivity rests upon a number of interconnected distinctive features.

- EANPC’s member organisations have traditionally been NPCs which bring together employer associations, trade unions and governments – and in many cases also academia – to define, discuss and work on (national) productivity problems. ‘True’ NPCs represent all national stakeholders - attempting to build mutual trust between stakeholders representing key productivity interest groups - labour, capital and government.
- From this follows EANPC’s ‘core values’ and ‘core purpose’: to address productivity (and productivity gains) as an issue of interest not only of shareholders, but to all business and societal stakeholders – investors, owners, managers, workers, suppliers, consumers, works councils, unions, local communities, etc.

In its core document – the Productivity Memorandum – EANPC describes its approach as addressing productivity as a ‘holistic concept’ which means that the inputs of the productivity ratio “cover not only the volume of labour but the quality and quantity of all resources – including the natural, infrastructural and organisational.”

In terms of ‘outputs’, we have to recognise that, in addition to the creation of goods and services, modern economic production also results in the ‘production’ of social and ecological impact.



Figure 1: Front cover of the EANPC productivity memorandum

EANPC therefore feels it is essential to address environmental and social factors when discussing productivity development. It describes this as “taking the ‘high road’ to enhanced performance – improving the quality of the factors of production and the ways in which they are used, having the medium and long term development of the enterprise in mind”^[05].

EANPC and Its Future Challenges

Challenges to the Association's Structures

EANPC, like all organisations, has evolved since its formation. One of the challenges facing the organisation is that there are now very few organisations in Europe that could properly be called 'national productivity centres'. There are still quite a few that have some form of productivity development remit but few that have a 'national' and 'inclusive' remit with the same kind of stakeholder involvement from all sides of industry and commerce.

The current members of EANPC are thus productivity-centric organisations but not 'national' centres. Though many of them do have strong links to their national government, few of them are inextricably tied into government economic policy.

However, though this means the EANPC is a different 'beast' than the EANPC of 30 or 40 years ago, it does bring some advantages. The EANPC concept of productivity as a multi-petalled flower, growing organically is perhaps more comprehensively reflected in the current membership which brings together organisations whose primary focus might be on the productivity-benefits of effective occupational safety and policy & practice, of appropriate innovation strategies, of skills development – or of one of the other productivity factors that make up the petals of the EANPC flower.

This does mean, however, that the challenge for EANPC is to show how these factors might be brought together into (that word again) a holistic approach to productivity development.

A further consequence of the 'separation' of productivity organisations from government is that most organisations perhaps think more carefully before paying membership fees to networking organisations like EANPC. EANPC has to provide a set of services that potential member organisations think useful and consider as 'good value' [06].



Figure 2:
The EANPC productivity flower – productivity and its contributing factors

Of course, this 'separation'; also brings a 'freedom' in that the members of EANPC are able, collectively, to set their own agenda and forward strategy for the organisation.

At the 'professional' or 'technical' level, EANPC is bringing together a disparate set of organisations (with, as we said above, different primary foci), yet has to make attractive the sharing of information about productivity topics, tools, measures and methodologies in ways which create a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts, and provides what might be termed a 'European' perspective.

Last but not least the Association has to keep on fostering and strengthening connection and collaboration with transnational bodies like ILO, UN sub-organisations, OECD, the European Commission, Eurofound . . .

New directions and old problems of productivity research and development

50 years after its establishment and 20 years after releasing its 'Productivity Memorandum', EANPC has to stand the test of time. Many developments – globalisation, digitalisation, demographic changes, to name only a few – are challenging traditional productivity concepts requiring new productivity ideas and measurement tools. They should be considered in the Association's future work in terms of monitoring substantial progress, industrial applicability and effective dissemination – by EANPC and by its member organisations.

Productivity, says the OECD in its first comprehensive guide to the various productivity measures, "is commonly defined as a ratio of a volume measure of output to a volume measure of input use. While there is no disagreement on this general notion, a look at the productivity literature and its various applications reveals very quickly that there is neither a unique purpose for, nor a single measure of, productivity" [07]. By now, the requirements to be up to the mark have been seemingly multiplied:

How to understand and measure productivity by accounting for, e.g.,

- the context of globalized markets,
- value chain impacts on firms' productivity,
- increasing co-operation in networks,
- service production and delivery,
- the digitization of goods and services production,
- the blurring distinction between hardware and software in the high-tech sectors of our economies,
- factory-less goods producers which do not produce products but control the production

- processes of their business clients,
- intellectual property which is produced in one country and used in another,
- non-produced, non-financial assets such as land, natural and sub-soil assets,
- 'green' productivity, energy 'efficiency' and natural resources productivity,
- labour forces' qualitative composition,
- the impact of social and human capital on productivity improvement?

Another important body of thought addresses the recording of the factors contributing to productivity growth. If we define productivity growth as the difference between output growth and input growth, productivity appears as a residual in need of explanation. Probably in 1956 productivity growth has been characterized – for the first time - as "a measure of our ignorance" [08]. Since then much research has been done to close the knowledge gap. One of many attempts to unravel the mystery is illustrated by the EANPC 'productivity flower' (see fig. 2) which smartly describes the wide variety of factors contributing to productivity development: "It is in fact impossible to state, within even broad bands, the relative impacts of these contributing factors. However, all the following contributing factors [economic growth – competition and quality – innovation and technology – employment – work organisation and learning organisations – safety and health and working conditions – skills/qualifications – environmental protection – social partnership] are important, each interacting with the others, ensuring that productivity is a holistic concept in which changes in one domain have, inevitably though not always predictably nor positively, repercussions on all others" [09]. It is and will remain a persistent task to keep track of these factors and their interrelations.

EANPC 1966 – 2016

In the introduction chapter we already pointed to the EPA European Productivity Agency (1953-1962) which has been replaced 1966 by EANPC – with another structure and a different mission.

The first thirty years - 1966-1996

EANPC's history starts in 1966 with an inaugural meeting held in Oslo. The directors of the participating NPCs decided on the establishment of an independent body, named the European Association of National Productivity Centres, and determined the statutes and finances. Furthermore, a fulltime official was appointed in time.^[10]

Of the 13 productivity centres represented in the Oslo meeting only one exists in more or less the same form, it is RKW, the German Productivity and Innovation Centre. Until now, member organisations left the Association, some of them being replaced by other organisations from the same country. Others merged into larger bodies or were transformed into more specialised organisations.

Along with its members the Association has changed – due to governmental restriction on centres' budgets and changing of the centres' environment, e.g. labour-management relations, technology developments, new forms of employment, working conditions, concerns about impacts of productivity growth on the natural environment, the development of the European Union, the globalization trend, etc.

Since the 1980s, in most European countries represented in the Association, strong competition has emerged from the private sector for their NPCs. Not only shrinking budgets, but also the trend that “what had been advocated as important approaches to productivity improvement are taken for granted as normal performance of business. [...] Whether an NPO [National Productivity Organisation] remains as a catalyst for the national productivity movement or becomes

one of many training, consulting or research institutions depends on public commitment.”^[11]

After executing national productivity programmes in the early 1950 supported by the Technical Assistance Programme of the Marshall Plan, the first areas of specialization for NPCs were management functions (1950s and 1960s), subsequently (1970s) they focused on new technologies and their impact on society including the productivity-employment relation. From the mid 1970s until the late 1980s the improvement of working conditions and national ‘humanisation of work’ programmes were important issues of debates, publications, and productivity seminars and conferences.

A new challenge emerged with the collapse of the former socialist countries which needed support in many sectors of the economy and the society, including the productivity development (1990s).

Since EANPC's main function is to pool and collate productivity information, considerable efforts have been expended on trend reports.

During the first years of the Association a monthly newsletter (single sheet, bi-lingual) has been launched: EuroProductivity. In 1984 a three times annual publication was born: epi, or Europe Productivity Ideas, with the last issue being launched 2003^[12].

EANPC 1996-2016

Since its establishment the EANPC was dedicated to a mission of disseminating the idea of productivity improvement as a driving force of economic and social development which improves the quality of living and working conditions. But it took some time until the mission and basic ideas of the Association were outlined in a comprehensive paper – the EANPC Productivity Memorandum ‘Productivity – the high road to wealth’ published 1999. The memorandum – now in its second version from December 2005 – is an attempt to help co-ordinate the work of the Association's member organisations by giving a more comprehensive meaning to the concept of productivity^[13]. The document also serves as a yardstick for organisations aiming to become members of the Association.

2002 was one of the most important years in EANPC's history. Until the end of that year Tony Hubert was full-time Secretary General followed, after 2003, by non-paid honorary office holders - with Sim Moors, Belgium, as the first Secretary General after Tony.

The draft minutes of the EANPC Managing Board meeting in Nicosia, Cyprus, November 22, 2002, show how the Association planned to cope with the new situation – to disburden the new Secretary General by enforcing project work and networking activities:

“[...] the EANPC will in future have no active information function: the new Secretary General will produce no written material (except annual invoices for membership fees), no publications” etc. The Board “agreed that activities in 2003 will take the form of ‘projects’.”

Attachment 2 of the 2002 Cyprus meeting minutes declares that from January 2003 “the Association operates on the basis of ‘projects’, each entrusted to a member organization, usually in cooperation with two other members. Of prime concern are the workshop meetings arranged in rotation by a host member. Each workshop meeting focuses on a key area of the host's own programme to which others can contribute. [...] A second project is the establishment of a European Productivity Network. EPN is open to institutions and individuals subscribing to the philosophy of the 1999 Memorandum of Productivity, Innovation, Quality of Working Life and Employment”.

A first consequence of the new situation was to hold ‘board meetings’ focusing on defined issues, e.g. the productivity of public services, open to non-members of the Association.

Another outcome of the Nicosia 2002 decisions was the planning and realisation of European Productivity Conferences (EPC) in 2007 (Finland), 2008 (Slovakia), 2009 (UK) and 2010 (Turkey), the latter organised together with the World Confederation of Productivity Science.

Several projects – mostly funded by the EU Commission – have been operated in collaboration of the Association's member organisations, e.g. on Mass Customisation Training, Productivity Training, Occupational Health and Safety, etc.^[14].

The EANPC showed its European commitment by publishing two position papers contributing to the future ‘EU 2020’ strategy^[15] and recommending to take the ‘high road’ to overcome the economic and social aftermath of the financial crisis^[16].

Appendices

Footnotes

- [01] McGlade 1998, p. 18.
- [02] McGlade 1998, p. 27.
- [03] Murray 2004 p. 3.
- [04] EPA 1954, p. 3.
- [05] EANPC 2005, p. 16.
- [06] Main services provided by EANPC are: seminars / conferences arranged in the context of the annual General Assemblies; a bi-annual newsletter; productivity related news published on the Association's website eanpc.eu (column 'insights') including productivity tools and measures made available by member organisations.
- [07] OECD 2001, p. 11. (For various reasons the insistence on volume measures is questionable.)
- [08] Abramovitz 1956, p. 11. The complete quotation goes like this: "Since we know little about the causes of productivity increase, the indicated importance of this element may be taken to be some sort of measure of our ignorance about the causes of economic growth in the United States and some sort of indication of where we need to concentrate our attention."
- [09] EANPC 2005, p. 17.
- [10] For the years 1966 to 1996 we refer, without explicit quotations, to Hubert 1995.
- [11] Prokopenko 1999.
- [12] In terms of recording EANPC's past two epi issues are of particular interest: "From Marshall Aid and Back: 30 Years of Activities and Members' Interests" (May 1996) and "Final Issue: Taking Stock 1966-2002" (Dec. 2002); see also "Productivity for our Future - Contributions to the EANPC Symposium, CPC Nicosia, Cyprus, Nov. 2002" (March 2003).
- [13] EANPC 2005, p. 17.
- [14] A further step was to develop the Association's statutes to adapt to the changed and changing environment. Until 2012 the statutes included the 1966 (!) list of member organisations. The current statutes define and distinguish the roles of Management Board and General Assembly - composed of all member organisations – which in the past were held under the common term of "board meetings".
- [15] EANPC 2010.
- [16] EANPC 2011.

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Additional material

Box 1:
EPA European Productivity Agency, List of National Productivity Organisations in Member Countries

AUSTRIA

ÖPZ Österreichisches Produktivitäts-Zentrum, Vienna

BELGIUM

OBAP Office Belge pour l'Accroissement de la Productivité, Brussels

DENMARK

Productivitetsudvalget, Copenhagen

FRANCE

Comité National de la Productivité, Paris
Commissariat General a la Productivité, Paris
AFAP Association Française pour l'Accroissement de la Productivité, Paris

GERMANY

RKW Rationalisierungs- und Innovationszentrum der Deutschen Wirtschaft, Eschborn

GREECE

ELKEPA Ellenikon Kentron Paragogikotitos, Athens

ICELAND

IMSI Iðnadarmalastofnun Islands, Reykjavik

ITALY

CNP Comitato Nazionale per la Produttività, Rome

THE NETHERLANDS

COP Contactgroep Opvoering Productiviteit, The Hague

NORWAY

NPI Norsk Produktivitetsinstitutt, Oslo

SWEDEN

Centralkommitten for Produktivetsfragor, Stockholm

SWITZERLAND

Centre Suisse de Productivité, Geneva

TRIESTE

Centro Sviluppo Economico, Trieste

TURKEY

Milletlerarasi İktisadi İşbirliği Teskilati, Ankara

Source:

EPA 1954, p. 65-66

Box 2:
EANPC Founding Organisations, 1966

BELGIUM

OBAP Office Belge pour l'accroissement de la Productivité, Brussels

DENMARK

Handelsministeriets Produktiviteitsudvalg, Copenhagen

FRANCE

CGP Commissariat Général a la Productivité, Paris

AFAP Association Française pour l'Accroissement de la Productivité, Paris

GERMANY

RKW Rationalisierungs- und Innovationszentrum der Deutschen Wirtschaft, Eschborn

GREECE

ELKEPA Ellenikon Kentron Paragogikotitos, Athens

ICELAND

IMSI Iðnadarmalastofnun Islands, Reykjavik

IRELAND

INPC, Irish National Productivity Committee, Dublin

ITALY

CNP Comitato Nazionale per la Produttività, Rome

LUXEMBOURG

OLAP Office Luxembourgeois pour l'Accroissement de la Productivité, Luxembourg

THE NETHERLANDS

COP Contactgroep Opvoering Productiviteit, The Hague

NORWAY

NPI Norsk Produktivitetsinstitutt, Oslo

SPAIN

CNPI Comision Nacional de Productividad Industrial, Madrid

YUGOSLAVIA

Slavezni Zavod Za Produktivnost Rada, Belgrade

Source:

Tony Hubert, e-mail communication to Peter Rehnström, 9 Nov. 2015

Box 3: Chairing the Association

- **Francis Raison** – France - 1966
- **Hans Büttner** – Germany - 1967-68
- **Svein Dalen** – Norway - 1969-70
- **Roger Talpaert** – Belgium - 1971
- **Linda Paretto** – Italy - 1972-73
- **Poul Assam** – Denmark - 1974-75
- **Zoltán Román** – Hungary - 1976-77
- **Gerry van der Mey** – Netherlands - 1978-79
- **Jack Ryan** – Ireland - 1980-82
- **Frans Verlinden** – Belgium - 1983-85
- **Zoltán Román** – Hungary - 1986-88
- **Pierre-Louis Remy** – France - 1989-91
- **Manos Deligiannakis / Yannis Nikolaou** – Greece - 1992-1996
- **Klaus Dieckhoff** – Germany - 1996-99
- **Peter Rehnström** – Finland - 1999-2009
- **Wolfgang Schröter** – Germany - 2009-11
- **John Heap** – United Kingdom - since 2011

Sources:

Hubert 1995; EANPC Secretariat



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