EUROSAI TRAINING COMMIITEE: EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The EUROSAI Training Committee (ETC) was set up at the XXII Governing Board meeting in 2000, with the mandate of providing support in training matters. This mandate has been carried out by promoting training events, by advising the Governing Board on the granting of financial subsidies for training and by performing the EUROSAI Training Strategy under the authority and the directions of the Governing Board.

The EUROSAI Training Strategy has dealt with the following issues:

- **Training:** deliver training based on identified needs and priorities, promote and support the organisation of training events (by EUROSAI members and in cooperation with EUROSAI Working Groups and IDI), identify training tools, evaluate training and disseminate training material.

- **Knowledge and information sharing:** through training events and material, through EUROSAI communication tools (websites and publications), through professional networks and in cooperation with EUROSAI Working Groups.

- **Institutional development:** through providing inputs to professional certification schemes, through cooperation with the INTOSAI Capacity Building Committee (CBC) and the INTOSAI Regional Working Groups, as well as with IDI and other partners.

Being aware that training is an important tool for capacity building and for the professional development of SAIs, EUROSAI has paid attention to it in all its dimensions, striving to develop a comprehensive and professional approach with diverse lines of action and a wide number of activities.

As the ETC has not provided training by itself and with its own resources, it could not fully develop all those dimensions. But it aimed at providing SAIs with information and support, encouraging exchange of experiences, promoting the provision of training and strengthening links with relevant bodies of EUROSAI and INTOSAI, as well as with external partners.

The ETC has developed expertise, produced outcomes, raised awareness and built networks within the EUROSAI community, which can be useful for the implementation of the EUROSAI

Strategic Plan. The ETC would like to share the experience accumulated and lessons learned during its eleven years of existence. Chairs and teams in charge of the Strategic Goals are invited to build on the experience of the ETC and its members for implementing their future activities.

I Training experience

1. Identifying training needs

The ETC issued three questionnaires to identify training needs and priorities (in 2003, 2006 and 2011), thus ensuring that needs and priorities of the EUROSAI member SAIs were up to date.

Lessons learned:

- ➔ *Updating training needs and priorities on a regular basis was useful.*
- ➔ *Training should be aimed at meeting the identified needs and priorities by also taking into account sub-regional interests, new challenges for SAIs and current developments in their environment.*
- ➔ *Flexibility is most important for organising tailor-made training.*
- ➔ *EUROSAI should be proactive in promoting training on the priority issues.*
- ➔ *EUROSAI Working Groups as well as IDI have information on specified training needs which should also be taken into account.*

2. Delivering training

From 2001 - 2011, EUROSAI member SAIs organised 43 training events, seminars and workshops. The ETC supported them by promoting the events, by providing a regular update on training needs and priorities, by advising the EUROSAI Governing Board on financial support for the events, by developing a Practical guide for organising training events and by drafting criteria for funding training events from the EUROSAI budget.

Lessons learned:

1. *Organising training events:*

- ▪ *Providing training through seminars and workshops is favoured by the majority of SAIs, therefore*
    - ➔ *tailor events to specific needs (e.g. target groups, number of participants, duration, format, material and technical requirements), e.g. by using pre-seminar questionnaires*
    - ➔ *ensure the practical orientation of training events (key speeches, panel discussions, workshops, case studies)*

➔ *better exploit the opportunities for advancing the strategic goals of EUROSAI by proactively matching the expertise of SAIs with the needs identified*

➔ *promote discussions (break-out groups, enough time after key speeches)*

➔ *keep a balance between internal and external experts*

➔ *hosting of events by various volunteering SAIs proved a good concept, therefore*

➔ *encourage SAIs to host events in the future*

➔ *provide financial and material support as well as technical expertise to the hosts of events*

▪ *The "Practical Guide for organising training events" has proved a helpful guidance and offers best practice examples for SAIs, therefore*

➔ *update the Guide on a regular basis*

➔ *disseminate the Guide for wider knowledge*

2. Supporting training

▪ *Rules concerning financial support for training are rather limited. The "Principles concerning the subsidies to be granted for events"[1] only state the procedures for requesting and justifying the subsidies and the indices for the maximum amount to be requested by the EUROSAI member SAIs, but no criteria for granting these subsidies.*

Therefore,

➔ *criteria for granting subsidies for training are necessary to enhance the transparency of the decision-making process*

➔ *on the basis of the criteria drafted by the ETC, common criteria for granting subsidies should be discussed and adopted as soon as possible*

▪ *Other forms of training can help to deliver training to a higher number of people at more reduced costs, to offer diversity of approaches and to complement and update the training delivered through seminars, workshops and other events, therefore*

➔ *explore and develop other training formula/alternatives (e.g. e-learning, networks, databases, e-discussion fora, identification of good practices, joint audit activities...)*

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[1] adopted by the V Congress 2002, Moscow

3. Evaluating training

The ETC developed evaluation forms (standard questionnaires and evaluation report template[2]) that could be used by SAIs to evaluate the training events they organised. These forms are useful tools for assessing that the training provided meets its targets and for ensuring comparable evaluation results.

Lessons learned:

➔ *make sure that EUROSAI training provides added value to the Organisation as a whole as well as to the individual member SAIs and that it is aimed at complementing SAI's own training measures, with full respect to SAI's independence*

➔ *assess whether target groups' expectations are effectively met*

➔ *use the evaluation results for planning future activities*

➔ *use the evaluation results to assess the need for a follow up of the seminar outcomes or for further cooperation on the seminar topic*

➔ *enhance sustainability of training by e.g. organising follow-up seminars/workshops or establishing networks for knowledge sharing and further cooperation afterwards*

4. Disseminating training information and material

The dissemination and communication of training information and material (within EUROSAI and within SAIs) is a key element for reinforcing the impact of training. When the EUROSAI website was redesigned in 2007, all training matters were included. SAIs that organised training events were asked to provide training material online, e.g. directly on the EUROSAI website or on their own websites with a link on the Training section of the EUROSAI website. Nevertheless, there is a limited knowledge of material available.

Lessons learned:

➔ *ensure that documents and material are documented and published*

➔ *commit SAIs that organised training events to make this material available*

➔ *better communicate the EUROSAI website as a platform to gather all information according to training*

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[2] Annex to the "Practical Guide for organising training events"

➔ *promote the expansion of the EUROSAI website from a mere collection of material towards a platform for gathering and sharing information and experiences on training*

➔ *keep training material reserved for EUROSAI members to balance their availability and guarantee the protection of intellectual property and the proper use of material*

➔ *promote a wider use of the websites in the EUROSAI framework (e.g. WG websites)*

➔ *encourage EUROSAI members to ensure effective distribution and communication of material within the individual SAIs*

➔ *use EUROSAI publications (Newsletter, Magazine) more widely to promote training*

5. Overcoming obstacles

The main obstacles in providing training arise from a key characteristic of EUROSAI, namely the diversity of its members, with a multitude of national languages, various geographical regions and public sector audit systems, as well as diverse mandates and differing stages of institutional development. This diversity being also a major asset of EUROSAI, it is nevertheless necessary to keep it in mind when organising training.

Lessons learned:

➔ *where necessary and reasonable, grant subsidies for interpretation and translation*
➔ *provide training for specific regional or inherent needs*
➔ *encourage knowledge sharing between SAIs with differing stages of institutional development*
➔ *design training events to give useful input for the work of both experienced and less experienced auditors*

II Knowledge sharing/Institutional development

1. Improving cooperation within EUROSAI

The EUROSAI working groups are important stakeholders concerning the sharing of knowledge, information and experiences. As training and institutional development are important parts of their work plans, EUROSAI can only profit from their training experience. Cooperation in this framework leads to a more efficient performance for a shared benefit.

Lessons learned:

➜ *further improve cooperation with EUROSAI working groups in:*
- *assessing training needs*
- *periodic planning of activities*
- *organising seminars/workshops*
- *providing experts*
- *providing access to networks and databases*
- *evaluating training (sharing tools, techniques and results)*
- *linking websites and disseminating information (also through the available publications)*
- *sharing lessons learned*

2. Improving cooperation with INTOSAI and with external partners

The ETC cooperated with INTOSAI and its Regional Working Groups as well as with IDI and SIGMA, liaised with the INTOSAI CBC, and explored possibilities for new ways of cooperation with universities and external partners.

Lessons learned

1. Cooperation with INTOSAI

➜ *further promote cooperation with INTOSAI's Regional Working Groups at the level of training, knowledge sharing and exchange of experience*
➜ *better align the periodic planning of activities*
➜ *strengthen and widen cooperation with the INTOSAI CBC*
➜ *cooperate with other INTOSAI committees and working groups*
➜ *promote cooperation with the INTOSAI Donor Cooperation Secretariat*

2. Cooperation with IDI

➔ *improve cooperation and information sharing in the field of programmes in which EUROSAI member SAIs might participate*

➔ *use IDI's information on SAIs' training needs*

➔ *improve cooperation in providing experts' networks/databases and contacts with experts*

➔ *learn from existing capacity building/development models as well as from guides and handbooks*

➔ *promote the dissemination and use of IDI's capacity building information and material*

3. Cooperation with external partners

➔ *promote further cooperation with SIGMA*

➔ *align the periodic planning of activities*

➔ *explore cooperation with universities in the fields of training, research, performance of audit and certification of auditors*

➔ *explore fields of cooperation with other audit professionals, e.g. joint training events, providing experts and sharing training material*

3. Improving professional networks

Based on the results of the 2011 survey on training needs, the ETC drafted a list with SAI experts in different audit fields and topics. Nevertheless, the setup of professional networks via fora on the EUROSAI website was not successful. For example, the "Newsgroup", an experts' discussion forum available on the EUROSAI website since 2004, was not used. A reason for this might be that EUROSAI member SAIs' staff were not yet ready for networking electronically. Anyway, it might be questionable if such professional networks would work nowadays. Though people always ask for specialised internet fora the actual use of these is not yet fully accepted.

Lessons learned:

➔ *explore anew the potential for electronic professional networks*

➔ *make use of existing networks of internal and external partners*

➔ *get better advantage of the EUROSAI website as an experts' forum*

III Organisational experience

Due to the development of the EUROSAI Training Committee (ETC) over the years, especially its growing number of members and its increasing tasks and activities, the ETC assessed the need of establishing a more structured internal organisation and of rationalising its procedures in order to operate in a sound and efficient way. It developed Terms of Reference (ToR) lying down structural and functional matters, as well as practical rules concerning the preparation, functioning and follow-up of meetings, as basis for the ETC structure and operation.

Lessons learned:
- ➔ *A structured approach is necessary for the successful work of any committee, working group etc.*
- ➔ *Committed chairs and members are key elements for efficient and quality work.*
- ➔ *The clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities within a committee or working group provides higher efficiency, a more transparent operation and a wider involvement of all the members.*
- ➔ *Different decision-making processes (meetings, written procedures, agreement via e-mail) should be provided for.*