



European Anti Poverty Network, Ireland

Working to end poverty in Ireland and Europe

Annual Report, 2012

protection groups members including
troika poverty experiencing
network social group
during european working
through ireland also
policy new work
meeting irish delegation
period europe national
community
presidency

Adopted by AGM 2013

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Introduction

2012 was a challenging year for people living in poverty in Ireland and across Europe. The fourth year of Ireland's adjustment programme agreed with the EC/IMF/ECB 'Troika' has seen further cuts in jobs, services and income for people on low incomes.

The community sector which provides much of EAPN Ireland's membership base has also been weakened by losing resources and autonomy and by increasing demands both from the people who we account to and by the state.

In this context, EAPN Ireland's role as a link between national and European policy debates is more vital than ever. We need to work together across Europe to learn from each other, to support each other and to find shared solutions to common challenges.

In 2012, EAPN Ireland and our allies in the Europe 2020 working group continued to promote policies which maintain an adequate living income, smooth the path to quality work and develop strong services, often against the flow of trends in mainstream debate.

We have promoted these policies to Government, to the Oireachtas and, in cooperation with our European network, to the European Institutions. This year, we also had a dialogue with the 'Troika', both directly and through their representatives in Ireland.

We have also insisted on basing our policies on the experiences and messages from people directly affected by poverty, unemployment and marginalisation and the organisations working directly with them and supporting the European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty to link these discussions across Europe.

EAPN Ireland has also devoted considerable resources to information and news flow to members and for community organisations and decision-makers generally through the e-mail News Flash and social media.

The funding from the Department of Environment And Local Government's *Scheme to Support National Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector* has been crucial in allowing this and in providing a basis to seek further funding.

This report outlines the main activities during 2012.

Looking forward, as the agreement with the Troika comes to an end, the coming year will see new opportunities and challenges as Ireland faces clear choices about what model for social and economic development to pursue.

We need to mobilise public support for the policies and resources needed to seriously tackle poverty and build a more equal Ireland in a more equal Europe.

Work Area 1

Information

Accessible information and resources for members and for people working against poverty generally are a large part of the work of EAPN Ireland.

We draw on our own research, on members' and allies' publications, on our European network and on Government, European and academic sources to support members in understanding and influencing Irish and EU policy and to promote EAPN perspectives.

Aim: To provide information to people experiencing poverty and groups that work with them to facilitate engagement with the European Social Agenda

EAPN Ireland News Flash

EAPN Ireland NewsFlash continued to be the main conduit for information, with over 1,500 subscribers, including members, journalists, politicians and civil servants. The NewsFlash includes Irish and European news, links to blogs and news reports of interest and information on forthcoming events.

Information Briefings

EAPN Ireland briefings are included in the Newsflash, posted on our website and distributed widely.

In 2012, we produced briefings on:

- Understanding the EU Fiscal Compact, in the lead-up to the referendum
- Analysis of National Reform Programmes and National Social Reports for 2012
- Issues in the Troika review of Irish progress on the Government-Troika Programme, June 2012
- Understanding the debates on the introduction of a "single adult welfare payment"

Picture: Speakers at the December 2012 seminar on Cork City Council's report, as part of an EAPN Ireland project, ***"Building co-ordination around communities and local needs: the future of a more inclusive Europe."***

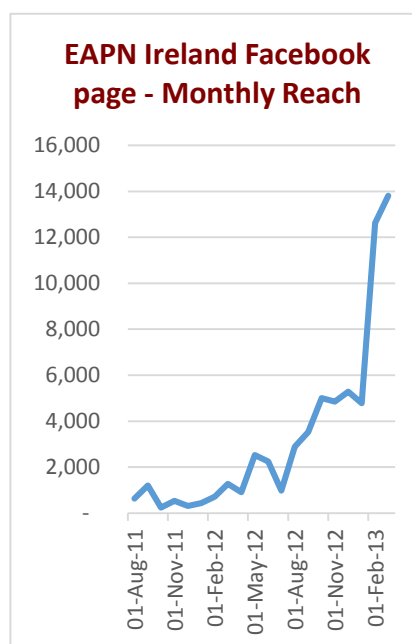
- David O'Donovan, Dublin City Council Integration Office.
- Tim Lucey, City Manager, Cork
- Cllr. John Buttimer, Lord Mayor of Cork.
- Tony Power, Social Inclusion Officer, Cork City Council.
- Maria Minguella, Social Inclusion Policy Analyst, Cork City Council
- Tina Neylon, Editor.
- Robin Hanan, Director, EAPN Ireland.
- Valerie O'Sullivan, Director of Services, Corporate and External Affairs, Cork City Council.



Website and social media

The EAPN Ireland website provides a hub for information and analysis on social policy developments in Ireland and in the European Union. It also provides the point of reference for much of our social media work. The site currently attracts between 3,000 and 4,000 unique visitors (i.e. the number of different people, having excluded repeat visits by the same person) every month.

During 2012, the number of people 'liking (subscribing to) the EAPN Ireland Facebook page increased by 31%, from 896 to 1,170, while the Twitter feed nearly doubled to 1,673 followers. Facebook activity rates grew much faster. The numbers talking about EAPN Ireland posts each month multiplied by 12 times to 326 people and the reach by 15 times to over 7,000 unique readers (this has doubled again since). This puts EAPN Ireland's social media among the most read and talked about among all NGOs and information sites in Ireland.



Oireachtas Brief

With the Wheel, EAPN Ireland continued to oversee the development and publication of Oireachtas Brief, an information service written by Brian Harvey for social justice NGOs and voluntary sector activists interested in issues of poverty and social exclusion in the Oireachtas.

Media

EAPN Ireland was active in the media, with press releases and radio interviews covering range of issues, including:

- The 'single adult welfare payment'
- The National Reform Programme
- Understanding poverty statistics
- Meetings with the Troika delegation
- The European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty
- Active Inclusion
- Poverty Proofing
- Budget 2013

An article on *The Social Impact of the Economic Crisis in Europe* was published in *Working Notes* and in a Norwegian academic journal.

Work Area 2

Empowerment, Policy and advocacy

EAPN Ireland works to promote effective Irish and European policies against poverty and to empower people affected by poverty and their organisations to influence policy-making.

Our engagement with people who experience poverty and the groups that work with them, informs our policy submissions and publications.

EAPN Ireland *Europe 2020* Working Group

The EAPN Ireland *Working Group on the Europe 2020 Strategy* brings together national organisations who want to engage with Government policy as it relates to Ireland's commitments on employment, poverty and social exclusion under the *Europe 2020* Strategy and the National Reform Programme.

This Group has led on many of the EAPN Ireland policy initiatives and submissions described in this section.

The members are:

- Age Action Ireland
- Congress Centres Network
- Disability Federation of Ireland
- EAPN Ireland
- Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
- National Adult Literacy Agency
- National Youth Council of Ireland
- National Women's Council of Ireland
- One Family
- OPEN Network of Lone Parents Organizations and
- SIPTU.



Aim To empower people who experience poverty and the groups that work with them to collectively progress anti poverty and social inclusion policy

Picture: EAPN Ireland Europe 2020 working group visit to Brussels to meet officials of the European Commission and Parliament, January 2012.

- Paul Ginnell, EAPN Ireland
- Lorraine Mulligan, SIPTU
- Philip O'Connor, Dublin Employment Pact
- Helen Ryan, NALA
- Bríd O'Brien, INOU

Dialogue with the “Troika”

The agreement between the Irish Government and the ‘Troika’ of the European Commission, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank has played a central role in guiding Irish policy in all social and economic areas.

The EAPN Ireland EAPN Europe 2020 Working Group has built up a regular liaison with the Troika to discuss our concerns and to clarify the relative roles of Troika and government on key policies as they affect poverty.

This has involved meetings with the Troika representative in Dublin and discussions with the Troika delegations in Ireland for their regular Quarterly Review of the Irish Programme.

Some policy areas discussed with the Troika included:

- activation strategies, including the new employment and income supports service INTREO
- the impact of Budget and austerity programmes on welfare and on poverty traps
- Government support for the community sector and
- anti-discrimination measures in relation to access to employment.

Budget 2013

EAPN Ireland’s submission on Budget 2013 was discussed at the Minister for Social Protection’s pre-Budget Forum and in the media, and was distributed widely to decision-makers and policy makers. It was subsequently discussed by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection.

The submission covered proposals on:

- Social Welfare Supports
- Proposals on the *Single Working Age Payment*
- Measures to tackle in-work poverty
- Employment and training services
- Strengthening services
- Taxation
- Social and gender impact assessment

Single Working Age Payment

EAPN Ireland made a submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection on the services and supports which would be necessary for the Government to pursue their proposals for a 'single working age payment'. The key messages in this submission were incorporated into the Committee's report. This issue was also pursued by EAPN Ireland in our meetings with the Troika, our Budget submission and media work.

Some other submissions

Some submissions by EAPN Ireland included:

- **The National Reform Programme:** We prepared a detailed analysis of Ireland's National Reform Programme Update, which contains the new national poverty target, and submitted it to the Department, politicians and the EU as well as circulating it widely
- **Department of Social Protection Tax and Welfare Advisory Group:** a submission was made on welfare to work issues, including poverty traps, income support measures and services
- **Disability Allowance:** A submission to the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare which argues strongly that there should be no changes to the eligibility criteria or levels of the Disability Allowance. What is needed is an increase in services and supports and addressing the barriers facing people with disabilities in accessing jobs, training and education.

Other policy work included a presentation to Monaghan Integrated Development at their Community Awards ceremony.



Picture: EAPN Ireland banner at an ICTU demonstration

European Policy

EAPN Ireland continued to provide a link between anti-poverty groups and people experiencing poverty in Ireland and European policy-making, through EAPN (Europe), through direct inputs and through Irish policy-makers and public representatives.

Some specific activities during this period included:

- **The EAPN Social Inclusion Group**, which includes Paul Ginnell from EAPN Ireland who is part of the steering group, closely followed the Europe 2020 Strategy and the National Reform Programmes and produced reports on both. It also covered a wide range of issues, including the preparation for the new round of Structural Funds
- **EAPN (Europe) 'Troika' Task Force**: We were actively involved on Task Force preparing a report on the impact of the recession on countries in "Troika" Programmes, which will be published shortly.
- **EAPN Conference on *Poverty in the EU and a common vision for action focusing on the Europe 2020*, 27-28 September** Paul Ginnell (EAPN Ireland), Louise McCann (Disability Federation of Ireland) and Alan Mc Menamin (Respond Housing Association, Donegal) played an active role in this Conference.
- **European Convention on Poverty, Brussels**: Robin Hanan (EAPN Ireland) and Maureen Ward of the Irish Traveller Movement, took part in this annual Convention in December as part of the Irish Government delegation. The Convention is charged with monitoring the EU social inclusion strategy.
- **Rural Development Programme, 2014-2020**: An important set of proposals was agreed for submission
- **Country Specific Recommendations for Europe 2020**: an input to these recommendations was started in 2012 and will be completed in 2013
- **European Fund to Aid the Most Disadvantaged**: A detailed submission was made to Emer Costello MEP, the on the new Regulation for the European Parliament

European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

Since 2002 meetings of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion have been taking place in Brussels as part of the European Social Inclusion Strategy. This is the only formal opportunity for people experiencing the issues to provide an input to the European Strategy and to engage directly with decision makers.

The meetings are hosted by the Member State holding the EU Presidency and are organised and facilitated by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) with support from the European Commission.

In May 2012 the 11th Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty (PEP) was attended by four Irish delegates, along with the delegation coordinator, Kay Lynch.

The meeting focused on the theme of housing and homelessness. The Irish delegation presented a summary of housing and housing policy in Ireland and also prepared a short drama on the experience of homelessness.

EAPN Ireland was active in the follow-up and evaluation of the May 2012 meeting on *Homelessness and Housing Rights in Times of Crisis*, which was attended by Kay Lynch (Coordinator), Paul Ginnell (facilitator) and the four Irish delegates



Picture: Irish Delegation to the 2012 European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty with Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton:

- Michael O’Gorman, Galway Simon
- Minister Joan Burton
- Maureen Ward, Irish Traveller Movement
- Debbie Brady, One Family
- Michael Mackey, Galway Simon.

Work Area 3

Strengthening the Network

As a Network with a wide variety of members, a key priority for EAPN Ireland is to maximise the involvement of members, and to develop strategic alliances with partner organisations in Ireland and across Europe.

In 2012 EAPN Ireland continued to refine its strategic and operational plans to deal with the challenges of reduced resources and new environments.

In addition EAPN Ireland supports a thematic working group on the *Europe 2020* Agenda discussed in Section 2.

Aim: To strengthen the Network's capacity to realise its objectives and goals

Membership and participation

EAPN Ireland's members include local, regional and national organisations concerned with the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Other stakeholders, including individuals, academics, political actors and state actors, have joined the network as associate members, without voting rights.

At the end of 2012 EAPN Ireland had over 250 members across Ireland, despite the number of closures of organisations due to the recession and funding cuts.

AGM 2012

EAPN Ireland is governed by an Annual General Meeting which elects the Board. The Board in turn elects officers who oversee the day to day management of the organisation.

EAPN Ireland's Annual General Meeting in June 2013, was attended by 25 representatives, with 39 members who could not attend sending proxy votes.

It was followed by a workshop on **Active Inclusion and Welfare reform**, with inputs from John Sweeney (ESRI); Bríd O'Brien, INOU and Fintan Farrell (EAPN Europe).



Picture: Participants at AGM 2012

EAPN Ireland Board

During 2012 the EAPN Ireland Board met ten times, including a special planning meeting which concentrated on communications and fundraising strategies.

The Board during this period was as follows

For the whole period

- Ann Irwin, Community Workers Coop
- Anna Visser, Migrant Rights Centre, Ireland
- Kay Lynch, Northside Community Law Centre
- Lorraine Mulligan, SIPTU
- Patrick Burke, Youth Work Ireland
- Peter Herrmann, European Social Organisation S Consultancy
- Philip O'Connor, Dublin Employment Pact
- Sheila Simmons, Irish Association of Older People
- Tess Murphy, Longford Women's Link

Resigned at AGM 2012

- Damien Peelo, Irish Traveller Movement

Elected at AGM 2012

- Farai Calvin Jeyacheya, Zimbabwe Heritage Trust
- Philip O'Connor was Chairperson throughout the period. Damien Peelo was Treasurer until the AGM, after which he was succeeded by Anna Visser. Lorraine Mulligan was elected Vice-Chairperson after the AGM.

Staffing and human resources

Robin Hanan started in January as Director. Paul Ginnell continued as Policy and Campaigns Worker and Maureen Gondipon as Administrative Assistant



Picture: Staff member Maureen Gondipon welcomes delegate Sr. Bernadette McMahon to the AGM

The European Network

As the Irish link to the EU-wide European Anti Poverty Network, EAPN Ireland is active in its Executive Committee, Working Groups, General Assembly and seminars.

- **Tess Murphy**, Longford Women's Link, represented us on the Executive Committee
- **Paul Ginnell** represents us on the Social Inclusion Working Group and is a member of its steering group
- **Philip O'Connor** was our representative on the Task Force on the Euro Crisis
- **Kay Lynch** is Coordinator of the Irish Delegation to the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

The EAPN (Europe) Annual General Assembly took place in Oslo in June 2012. The delegation to the General Assembly was made up of Kay Lynch, Tess Murphy, Robin Hanan and Paul Ginnell.

Networking and Alliances

During the reporting period EAPN Ireland acted as Secretariat for the Community Platform. We are also represented on the Steering Group of the Equality and Rights Alliance (ERA) and actively contribute to European Network against Racism Ireland; the 17 October Committee (UN Day Against Poverty), the Social Policy Network and the Community Employer's Forum.

In addition in this period EAPN Ireland, staff volunteers and members participated in a wide range of events and activities.



Picture: A photo shoot for the Coalition to Protect the low paid – one of the alliances which EAPN Ireland takes part in.