**EU INCLUSION STRATEGIES GROUP**

*Friday, 3 October 2014 (PM)*

*Chair: Paul Ginnell*

***Minutes***

**Attendance:** Eugen Bierling-Wagner (EAPN AT), Elke Vandermeerschen (EAPN BE), Nino Žganec (EAPN HR), Marina Koukou (EAPN CY), Katarina Klamková (EAPN CZ), Ole Meldgaard (EAPN DK), Kiira Gornischeff & Kärt Mere (EAPN EE), Marjatta Kaurala (EAPN FI), Jeanne Dietrich (EAPN FR), Jens E. Schrödter (EAPN DE), Johanna Lászlo (EAPN HU), Sigrún Birgisdóttir (EAPN IC), Paul Ginnell (EAPN IE), Letizia Cesarini-Sforza (EAPN IT), Norbert Snarskis (EAPN LV), Robert Urbé (EAPN LU), Mila Carovska (MK EAPN), Vincent Magri (EAPN MT), Sonja Leemkuil (EAPN NL), Dag Westerheim (EAPN NO), Kamila Płowiec (EAPN PL), Sérgio Aires (EAPN PT), Iris Alexe (EAPN RO), Marija Babović (EAPN SR), Slavomíra Mareková (EAPN SK), Graciela Malgesini (EAPN ES), Gunvi Haggren (EAPN SE), Katherine Duffy (EAPN UK), Freek Spinnewijn (FEANTSA), Sian Jones, Amana Ferro, Rebecca Lee, Regina Mattsson, Barbara Helfferich (EAPN Secretariat)

**Apologies:** Douhomir Minev (EAPN BG), Vito Telesca (EAPN IT), Maciej Kucharczyk (AGE Platform), Réka Tunyogi / Agata D’Addato (Eurochild), Catherine Mallet (Eurodiaconia)

**No answer:** Nickos Ntasios (EAPN GR), Giedrė Kvieskienė (EAPN LT), Artur Benedyktowicz (Caritas Europa).

**Introduction**

Chair Paul Ginnell (EAPN Ireland welcomed participants. **Agenda** adopted, with a suggestion to also discuss some feedback from the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty (Brussels, 22-24 September 2014). Chair reminded participants about the buddy system – if you are a new member and would like more support about the work of the group, please contact the Secretariat. **Minutes** adopted, with three requests for correction from Katherine / UK (pages, 10, and 18), one from Jens / DE (page 23) and two from Robert / LU (page 9 and 16). **Matters arising**: All the action points have been done (NRP report, Youth paper, Active Inclusion leaflet, Mid-Term Review paper, Giving Citizens a Voice – Task Force product).

**Mid-Term Review Follow-Up**

**Feed-Back from the Policy Conference**

**Katherine / UK** – There were so many speakers, I felt a little overwhelmed. I noticed the difference between our agenda, and the agenda we are following with decision-makers. It is very important to be aware of this difference. Our agenda includes prominently the poverty target, and I was wondering if we are doing everything we can about it. Another point in our agenda is minimum income – as it makes a difference to people, and it is also about solidarity. The third thing is the poverty programme, which can allow access to resources and recognition of our work. Better economic and social governance is also important, and getting a better balance between the two. Finally, the framework that we’re working in is not social and democratic anymore. We need to find ways of getting our agenda and its messages through to people. Also, we can’t waste time or resources, but define clear priorities and focus on them. I heard that the EPAP might disappear, and there are were also inferences that the poverty target might go.

**Gunvi / SE** – It was mentioned that there might not be NRPs anymore, and they are one of our key methods of participation. What will happen with involvement if they disappear, what is our strategy? Engagement with the NRPs is also one of the main reasons we are funded for.

**Vincent / MT** – I echo what Gunvi said. I wonder what is the most strategic document, the NRP or the budget? I think the latter, and the NRPs often don’t mirror what is in the budget. All the information was excellent, but it was too much information, and not enough time to react. We should envisage other ways to facilitate contact between us and speakers.

**Sonja / NL** – There was not enough time for good discussion. Poverty and health inequalities were mentioned, it is something we should maybe pay more attention to.

**Eugen / AT** – Four hours were too much, and too much was packed in it. The panel can’t answer all the issues we raised in 5 minutes.

**Johanna / HU** – Following up on what Lieve Fransen said, we could maybe try to involve Greece more, reach out and show solidarity. Like in my country, sometimes terrible things happen at the national level, and countries shouldn’t be left alone.

**Letizia / IT** – I am very impressed with the work that this Group has done. It is however, always a good idea to also have a controversial voice present, to keep the debate alive.

**Ole / DK** – Everybody kept saying that this is an important moment, but we must be cautious about this Mid-Term Review and what comes out of it.

**Marina / CY** – There was too little time for discussion and debate. I also noticed that all speakers agreed with each other, including DG Employment agreeing that there are things that don’t work in the Europe 2020 Strategy. Unfortunately, they didn’t offer any solutions. I am also worried about what this “modernization of social protection systems” might mean.

**Jeanne / FR** – I thought the panel was very good, because we had all important decision-makers represented. Yes, more time for discussions would have been good, but it is hard to juggle things in a short amount of time, so I think we did the very best we could. The TTIP was mentioned, in EAPN FR we are currently writing a position paper on it.

**Graciela / ES** – I missed dialoguing with economic authorities. Also, the TTIP is important, also because we are more and more following the US model and losing our European Social Model. Finally, it is indeed very important to work on health, access to health, and health inequalities.

**Norberts / LV** – The level of minimum income in Latvia is 60 euro a month, but the crisis is not less severe than in other countries. We need to share more our understanding of poverty.

**Slavomira / SK** – ETUC is only interested in workers who pay fees. They don’t care about the unemployed, about people living on benefits, about single mothers. As for workers, salaries are so low, people can’t live off them. We need to move towards comprehensive social protection for all.

**Discussion on the draft version of the consultation response**

[**See powerpoint**](http://www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EUISG/2014-oct3-4/2-SJ-Questionaire-M-T-Review.ppt)

Sian presented the draft response and highlighted key areas for debate.

**Sian** – The draft response to the consultation has been sent to members. It builds on our position paper, which was already sent to the European Commission in the summer. Some questions have straightforward answers, but some not so much, and these should be discussed together today.

**Freek / FEANTSA** – We need to be careful about the answers, because, if we criticize certain initiatives too much (such as the EPAP, for instance), they might be abandoned.

**Jeanne / FR** – We are also currently finalizing our response to the consultation, and try to point to what is happening in other countries, such as Germany has a bad employment model (mini jobs etc.), while Belgium, a solid one. It is useful to know what happens in other countries.

**Katherine / UK** – The money is there, is just what it is being used for. For instance, while we have cuts in essential services and welfare, there is a load of unfunded tax rebates for those better off.

**Kärt / EE** – Learning from other countries is essential. In Estonia, the Government thinks that universal provision is a waste, and services and benefits should be targeted to the poor. We pointed to Nordic countries, and showed that services only for poor people are poor services.

**Graciela / ES** – We are wondering what is the best way, to flood the Commission with questionnaires, all saying the same thing, or send just one with a clear message.

**Sian / Secretariat** – This was discussed at our last meeting, when we said that EAPN Europe will be doing a response, and that each network is encouraged to do their own (one or several). You can build on the EAPN Europe one, or you can send us yours, so we can incorporate it. We are not sure what the Commission will be doing with them, and how transparent the process will be.

**Sérgio / Portugal** – This process is complex and not transparent, and the questions are difficult for people working at the national and local level. I am not sure that the number of responses matters. What we should do is criticize the process, because this is not dialogue, it is not the right way to deal with anything.

**Robert / LU** – EAPN participated, through Paul, in a peer review, and we should include this as a positive element in our response, as participation of civil society in peer reviews is very limited.

**Marija / SR** – Maybe you are not aware of that, but since last year we have a “Europe 2020 for South-East Europe”, and, since everything is copied from the EU Strategy (targets, objectives, methodology), maybe it is interesting to include something on this as well, under cooperation and exchanges and sharing with other countries.

**ACTION POINTS:**

* **Please come back with track changes on the proposal for submission by EAPN Europe, which was sent to you by email. Deadline – Friday, 10th of October. The submission will be finalized to be sent to the Commission by the 17th October.**
* **Members are encouraged to make their own submission, but it is your own choice whether you want to or not.. We will send the link again. Deadline – Friday, 31st of October. Please send a copy to the rest of the group and the secretariat.**

**Annual Convention of the EPAP**

Barbara presented the latest programme and state of play on the Annual Convention.

**Paul / IE** – You should contact your national Government and see about obtaining a place (or several) in your national delegation to this event. The EAPN Secretariat has been allocated 15 places, which will be distributed to the countries who did not manage to obtain a place in the national delegation.

**Barbara / Secretariat** – By the end of October, the Commission will have an overview of how many places are still left, and we might obtain additional places. The estimated size of the Convention is about 800-1000 people, and it will take place in the same venue as in previous years – The Egg. This year we will not have a place in the opening plenary, due to other organizations complaining. The Social Platform will speak, and represent all its members, as well as civil society in general. It is expected that President Juncker will attend, as well as Commissioner Marianne Thyssen. There are two types of group work: workshops, organized by the European Commission, and side-events, organized by stakeholders. Due to the large attendance, each workshop will have about 150 people, which makes it very difficult. We will be involved in the Governance workshop, and have been invited by DG Energy to help organize the energy poverty workshop, we also have a speaker in the workshop on integrated services. We are also part of two side-events, organized with other stakeholders. There is a session on Empowering civil society, but it deals with developing countries, not European. It is bad timing for the Convention, because of the change of Commissioner, and because of the Mid-Term Review – it is difficult for them to answer questions or know what to do with the input received.

**Sian / Secretariat** – We are also involved in three side-events. One is run by the Investing in Children alliance, where Kärt is a member of the Steering Group. The other is access to adequate income throughout the lifecycle, with Solidar, Women’s Lobby, AGE. The other one is about Active Inclusion of the Roma, where we were asked to present our Active Inclusion leaflet

**Sérgio / Secretariat** – It is worrying that other European Organisations complained that EAPN played a too prominent role at the last Convention.

**Graciela / ES** – We made a proposal to the Spanish Government about the Governance workshop, but we were told that the Commission is organizing it and it’s already pretty much done.

**Jeanne / FR** – What our messages to this Convention? Especially to the Governance workshop?

**Katherine / UK** – There is a striking absence of national Governments in the programme. Italy appears three times, which is maybe normal because of the Presidency, Northern Ireland and India twice, but this is it. I find this quite depressing.

**Paul / IE** – A comprehensive email, with all information, will be sent to all by the Secretariat.

**ACTION POINTS**

* **Barbara will coordinate an updated email with latest information. A meeting will be organized for EAPN members to prepare. There will be a common key messages paper.**
* **Members to contact their national governments to try to get places.**

**Working with new Parliament and Commission**

**Barbara / Secretariat** – Presented the current developments regards the new Parliament and Commission. [**See PowerPoint presentation**](http://www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EUISG/2014-oct3-4/3-BH-The-new-political-context.ppt).

**Graciela / ES** – There has been great mobilization against the Spanish nominee, Cañete, proposed for Climate Change and Environments. He might be rejected as a result.

**Sérgio / PT** – I had a meeting with Martin Schulz, as EAPN is now trying to position itself with the new institutions. We are trying to set up a routine, where we meet the Commissioner twice a year, and the President of the European Parliament once a year. We spoke about the annual hearing of the people experiencing poverty, about the Europe 2020 Strategy, and about the Intergroups.

**Marina / CY** – EAPN ran a very successful elections campaign, where we asked candidates to sign our pledge. Are we following up on that, and if yes, how?

**Barbara / Secretariat** – 80 candidates who signed our pledge have been elected to Parliament. The complete list is on our website. We will keep reminding them of their commitments and try to keep them involved, but, for a matter of capacity, we don’t do much more at this stage.

**Sian / Secretariat** – We tried, as EAPN and as the Semester Alliance, to insert some questions in the hearings for the Commissioners. Some were picked up, but not so many on poverty. A clear example of an engaged MEP is Marian Harkin from Ireland, who obviously felt pressure from national members. This shows that there is only so much we can do at the European level, it is important to keep national contacts with your MEPs.

Close of the Friday Session.

***Saturday 4th October***

**Chair AM: Sonja Leemkuil**

**Introduction**

Sonja started by giving a review of the previous day and an overview of Saturday’s agenda. She highlighted that the Steering Group proposed a short additional item on the PEP meeting. This was agreed by the group.

**PEP Meeting**.

**Sonja/NL**: It was a good meeting with good preparation, and strong key messages.

**Elke/BE**: The Belgian delegation did their evaluation and found that it was a very good meeting with delegates happy about it. The preparation was difficult because of the theme on Structural Funds, but in the end they enjoyed the discussion. They had some regrets of the change of concept from last year outside the Parliament, as missed this opportunity with MEPs.

**Vincent/MT**: It was my first meeting, we had 2 young people in poverty as well as EAPN secretary. We presented our ESF project to produce a tool kit to teach Maltese to adults which is now been introduced in schools and life-long learning. However, we were in the youth workshop, with a lot of conflicting views. It’s supposed to give more voice to vulnerable, but the representatives from the Commission and representatives were more vociferous. There should be more listening from our side. There was a message of hope in Europe and the institutions, despite all the difficulties.

**Sergio/PT:** The official messages still have to be delivered. Difficult theme with Structural Funds, but showed it was possible and important to do it. The message of hope was still there. People are still believing in the EU and the possibility of change. 75% of the agenda was given to the people, then some space to the institutions. Another message was on governance and that the process should be simpler and more open. Lack of participation and involvement of people in poverty is key. Why not have a Directive on participation? Another message was trust – politicians think NGOs working with people in poverty are not able to spend the money.

**Jurgen/Austria**: Stuctural Funds are very complicated for NGOs, we should make pools of funds to provide simpler methods to give direct funding to small NGOs and to the grass-roots. The SF is used too often for governments and big companies and organisations. We agree that there needs to be more discussion/debate with the members. The politicians must listen, not talk.

**Letizia/Italy**: more participation means different methodologies. We’re still stuck in old ways of working groups, with people talking which is difficult and boring. EAPN Italy is part of a new project, we’ve published our booklet - about techniques of participation which help to make people feel at home.

**Jeanne/France**: EAPN France were not happy about the theme as they thought that the decisions on SF were already taken, so not possible to have an impact. One proposal is to ask the Commission and institutions to give written answers reacting to people experiencing poverty’s questions. Another proposal is to suggest a Council of PEP at the European Level – this we have at France, at local and national level.

**Commission Application - Work Programme 2015**

[**See powerpoint**](http://www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EUISG/2014-oct3-4/4b-BH-WorkProgramme-2015.ppt)**. Barbara** presented the WP 2015, as presented for funding to the Commission, and highlighted where the EUISG is impacted.

The Commission set a very specific set of priorities in line with engaging with and monitoring Europe 2020 and Semester. Then encouraging stakeholder involvement and cooperation between stakeholders, strengthening the capacity of networks and knowledge of EU processes. Providing data and relevant information about citizen’s concerns was a final area.

It was a 10 million Euro call, which 16 networks could apply for, within the partnership agreement signed last year. Most applied, so there is an element of competition. EAPN had a meeting with the Commission, and they underlined that the best proposals gets most of the money. What the Commission considers a good answer to the call is another issue. We have to provide 20% co-financing, and we have to give a large amount of detail on how the budget is spent in terms of time and money. We applied for 1 million, and to fund 249.000 Euros matching funding. The core budget currently does not cover all the costs of staff, which are now also covered by the Alliance project. See rest of powerpoint for the detailed proposals.

**New proposals include**: a budget for awareness-raising activities at the national level around Europe 2020, developing social situation reports, as well as our usual engagement and monitoring activities. There will be 2 Policy Task Forces, as well as follow up work on mapping access to services. However, there will be a big pressure on budget and resources, with less staff resources than this year, as Vincent will not be replaced, (ie loss of one full policy officer) and Sian as overall Policy Coordinator and Amana as Senior Policy Officer will spend 4 and 3 days respectively on EAPN core work with another day funded through the renewal of the Alliance project if successful.

**Summary of Questions**

* What kind of capacity building, awareness-raising/ activities are proposed? It would be good that we could do partnerships/learn from other networks.
* Is it a straightforward competition between the networks. What criteria? Would Eurosceptics be excluded?
* Is there going to be a policy conference, how will this be done?
* Why were members not consulted on the proposals for the Task Forces and the rest?
* How does the awareness-raising activities work in relation to the Semester Alliance?
* You said that there was 90.000 Euros, this means 6.000 per project. Before it was 1, 400 Euros. Translation was 1.800 – where is this in the 6.000 Euros. For the 15, if they are involved in horizontal cooperation, who cooperates with the 15?

**Answers from Barbara/EAPN Director and Sergio/Leticia – President/Vice President of Bureau**

* The proposal on awareness-raising will be deliberately left open. It could be a conference or a training session at national level, visibility campaign, establish a national/cross-national campaign with journalists. It would be good to have one common action.
* The work will be separately funded 4-6.000 Euros. But all networks will receive something a little less than before for all networks. Translations will also be slightly reduced.
* The budget for 15 pilots will be increased, within these everybody can participate. We’re looking for projects for networks, there will need to be some criteria. There would be added value to build up cooperation between particular regions or in a member state.
* Policy Conference – we have no money for it, as other areas were prioritized. As we have a Strategic Conference – this has swallowed a lot of money. We’ve increased the budget for representation, which should allow us to transport some people, but not all but need to find cheap venues. Sergio added that they would find a way to have a policy conference.
* There was no possibility to have full consultation, although a letter went out to EUISG and EXCO member in the summer asking for comments. We may be told to change things anyway, and we are still challenging the fact they continue to treat EAPN as a project.
* Alliance Project – we’re not sure if there will be a call, or if will get it. Although EAPN will apply. The two activities with national alliances are not contradictory but complementary.
* Clarification was asked on differences between minimum income, basic income, minimum wage and living wage. Katherine/UK provides the summary: Minimum Income is means-tested social assistance delivered by govt. Basic income is a demand for all citizens to have a basic income which they can add to it, by working or other sources. Minimum wage is mainly a legal minimum. Living wage is a campaign demand which would allow a higher budgeted standard of living related to real needs.

**ACTION POINTS**

* **Confirmation will be sent of the funding and the changes in budget when received in November**
* **Terms of reference for the funding of the awareness-raising will be drafted and circulated to the group before the end of the year.**
* **Members should discuss with their networks/organisations possible activities.**
* **A full work programme for the EUISG will be developed as usual for the February meeting, confirming member and secretariat action.**

**Make the EUISG work better for members**

Graciela and Paul presented a summary of the EUISG presentation to the EXCO/GA and tdhe main conclusions. Graciela presented the key challenges, internal and external. Then presented the main conclusions from the World Café**.** [**See Graciela’s powerpoint**](http://www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EUISG/2014-oct3-4/Input-to-EXCO-Graciela-Jun2014.ppt)**.** [**See Paul’s powerpoint**](http://www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EUISG/2014-oct3-4/Input-to-EXCO-Paul-Jun2014.ppt)**.**

* EAPN needs to keep working on Europe 2020, as it’s the main EU policy framework and impacts so strongly on our funding.
* Give more focus to CSRs as they are a driver for national policy, although NRPs are the basis for national engagement with governments.
* Need to work on macroeconomic agenda and get more expertise.
* Be more pro-active, ie preparing own inputs/social situation analysis before the NRPs
* Europe 2020 is a major challenge for non EU countries. Focus should be on anti-poverty strategies and monitoring government’s performance as benchmarking.
* Need to refocus on key priorities – it’s not possible to do everything.
* Must consider other ways of collecting information, beyond questionnaires.
* Simplify documents and invest more in capacity building
* Look more clearly at the overlaps with the Alliance.

**Main Recommendations**

* Increase coherence across EAPN – EXCO/MASS/TASK Forces with EUISG and shared responsibility, capacity building is a major issue.
* Improve relations with EXCO: with more regular contacts, common meeting once a year and idea of common sub-groups.
* EUIS members must do more to engage members at national level in the EU policy work – give feedback to your members with notes, set up Europe or Europe 2020 groups to debate the EU matters, discuss with national network boards, involve PEP.
* Use new technologies better – think outside the box, ie streaming meetings, skype sessions, short videos on key topics and more participative methodologies.
* Be realistic but responsible – recognize different levels and capacity, but recognize that this policy work is crucial as part of EAPN’s common project. Members need to take responsibility for raising their issues/concerns, provide capacity building for members and the implement agreed commitments.

**Questions**

* **Katherine/UK**: What support will the group get from the secretariat? With the reduction of Policy officers?
* A: **Sian** will work 4 days and Amana 3 days, in support of the group, but Vincent will not be replaced, so this is one policy officer less. This has implications for the work, particularly work with members on publications and events.
* **Paul:** This puts back the responsibility on the group, to support the secretariat. Direct lobbying at EU level will be still be the responsibility of the secretariat, but inevitably reduced.

**Plenary discussion in preparation for work groups**

**2 Questions:**

1. **How can we improve member’s engagement with Europe 2020, will the WP 2015 proposals help?**
2. **How can we change the work of the meetings to be more useful ie focus more on policy themes, as a way of bringing Europe 2020.Can we share more?**

**Feedback from the 3 groups**

**Feedback from 3 small working groups**

**Group 1: Rapporteur: Jeanne/FR**

**Question 1**

* How to get more motivation for this work? We have to find arguments to use towards national networks. Some examples: we have a new Commission, so it’s the right moment to get change. Some say we don’t see the link with our concerns, so we must show them that any work you carry out with NRP, is really useful for issues at national level. Also if you don’t try to influence Europe, then you will have to accept what EU imposes. It’s in your interests
* We have a problem of knowledge – we need more reminders and capacity building – ie on the Tool Kit, and on the timeline - the key dates/actions..
* Find the EU papers long and technical, good to address institutions, but hard to use them at national level. We need 2 kind of papers**.** Some for the EU institutions and some for use at national level.

**Question 2**

* Didn’t discuss question 2 – ie how to improve the EUISG meetings. We discussed a little social situation reports, and highlighted that they could be based on a more simple approach ie the 3 most important facts about poverty and with argumentation. It could be easier to involve people experiencing poverty and for the policy conference.

**Group 2: Rapporteur:Vincent/MT**

**Question 1**

* Problem of national groups that don’t have enough resources or know how to study the issues.
* Sometimes better to work on thematic issues – eg seminars/workshops – to invite Govts, EP, Trade Unions, rather than to prioritize reports. This should give voice to the people.
* The importance of having regional meetings/conferences/capacity building.
* More important to work on CSRs and less on the NRPs, and to be more effective – try to involve the media to make pressure and made policy change. But we should recognize that swings the focus towards the Commission than national governments.
* We need guidelines on how to proceed, how to promote these activities
* Social reports are only useful if they are well disseminated ie media exposure.

**Question 2**

* We need to bring in expertise, particularly around issues of macroeconomics.
* We should use participatory techniques, use more creative ideas also in the workshops here, less formal plenaries.

**Additions**

**Letizia/IT:** The group appreciated the idea of the awareness-raising activities. Social reports could be on thematic issues that we all work together – people in poverty speaking for themselves.

**Elke/BE**: On the 2nd Question, it’s important to have more in depth questions on specific themes – to use the time together instead of in separate sub-groups, although we could still work in parallel groups on one common theme, for example macro-economic, have capacity building, invite the necessary experts, or have a common book, or preparation.

**Group 3: Rapporteur: Kiira**

**Question 1 and 2**

* How can we improve member engagement? only focus on the 5 targets, rather than the whole thing. We need simple documents and capacity building on how the Semester works.
* Big success of the EMIN shows what can work ie having a concrete budget and a narrow topic, and had to take concrete steps. Useful to focus on narrow subjects and sub-groups.

**Additions**

**Maria/Serbia** - We should have 3 issues, on specific topics, and to be more interactive.

**Katherine/UK** – 3 members of the discussion are not in EU, 1 in Troika, and 1 not in Euro or fiscal compact – so it’s difficult to only work with EU frameworks. We should focus on the policy areas that we can take it home. Other thing is doing something fresh. People prioritize EMIN as they’re paid for it and it’s new.

**Graciela/ES** – Sometimes we don’t need a document. We should be more flexible, the youtube video then you have a debate, or other things not necessarily in paper.

**Letizia/IT** – We need to challenge the language of the European Commission. Be simpler and read by everybody.

**Paul/IE** – focussing on CSRs over NRPs… Whilst I agree with this, I don’t think we can stop engaging with NRP, because it’s a report coming from national level – only place that government say what it’s doing on antipoverty policy. We have to continue to engage, but in a more creative level. Otherwise.. all we’re left with are the Convergence and Stability programmes.. so we need to maintain them and continue to engage.

**Joanna/HU** – like to highlight a practice we use, where all the papers we develop we get the people experiencing poverty to check it.

**Elke/BE** – we have to be pragmatic. Documents have different audiences and we have to be able to do both – technical and more basic communicative one’s

**SUMMARY**

* Confirmation of the interest in the awareness-raising activities, with less clarity about the social situation reports. A thematic approach, may be a way forward, but need to be clear on the target audience and communication strategy. Issue of language/translation also key.
* Recognition of the need to reinforce working at the national level between the EXCO and EUISG – more sharing of documents, meeting to discuss and get input.
* Preference to work more on CSRs than NRPs, but recognizing that if we are to support engagement in a national process, then the NRP are the instrument.
* Need to review documents target audience and language – ie produce documents more for national use as well as EU technical documents.
* Some proposals on simpler capacity building tools – ie summary of tool kit (1-2 pages).
* Tool kits and capacity building are important, but need reminders and a simple, step by step work-programme.
* Be creative around other communication tools – both in our dissemination work and within the EUISG – ie videos, visual aids.
* Use more participative workshop methods in the EUISG, rather than formal meetings in plenary.
* Preference for thematic discussions on key topics, ie parallel discussion rather than fixed alternative sub-groups where there can be mutual learning and exchange – with outside speakers, and using inputs from members. Egs – macroecononomic, empowerment strategies.

**ACTION POINTS**

* **Steering Group and Secretariat to review proposals and come back with proposal for shaping work programme and methodologies for February meeting.**
* **Members to actively discuss with their networks how they can work together on Europe 2020, and in particular the ideas around the awareness-raising activities and social situation reports.**

***Afternoon Session***

***Chair: Graciela Malgesini***

**EU Semester Alliance**

**Graciela** introduced the discussion about the Semester Alliance and asked Sian to present the current activities of the Semester project. Sian [presented a powerpoint](http://www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EUISG/2014-oct3-4/7-SJ-Update-Semester-Alliance.ppt).

**Danish Alliance**: Sian invited the Danish network to comment and complement the information. Ole explained that they are now member of a contact committee set up by the government, which is scheduled to meet three times year with the minister and at every meeting the alliance will be asked to speak. . He added that last Tuesday he was invited to give input. Ole underlined that there was no doubt now that the Alliance had been noted by the Ministry.

**Irish Alliance:** Paul Ginnell took the floor speaking about the Alliance activities in Ireland. He said that Ireland was positive on the alliance, but that it had been a big challenge putting it together. He added that there were ten members in the Alliance. The overall assessment was that Europe 2020 was invisible; that there was a dominance of macro-economic policies creating an imbalance between the economic and the social. The Alliance also had a common response to the Country Specific Recommendations, which was circulated. It also met with the Commission office in Ireland, i.e. with the assigned European Semester officer. Alliance members had expressed an interest in a broader alliance and were positive about continuous contact. It was also felt that there was a lot of common ground on the Country Specific Recommendations. The broad alliance made it possible to engage with the national EU Committee and the Irish members of the European Parliament. There was, however, little engagement with the officials responsible for the National Reform Programme. The Alliance also used the toolkit and produced a short briefing on the Semester. Paul continued to say that the Alliance website was quite complete. One or two of the members worked with adult literacy agencies and did a lot of work to make the documents by the government more accessible. Finally, the Irish Semester Alliance will hold a conference at the end of November.

**Bulgarian Alliance:** Sian then presented the Bulgarian Semester Alliance since Douhomir had not been able to attend the meeting. The Bulgarian Semester Alliance produced a big, ambitious report about the European Semester. “It is very detailed despite the fact that it is a consensus document.” The Alliance also met with members of the national parliament, conducted awareness raising activities and targeted in particular the media and the academic community.

**EU activities**: Sian spoke about the capacity building workshop in June and how successful it was and that it showed what can be done, but that there was a need to make more time to work in such interactive way. She said that the participants had highlighted the big advantage to building a joint approach. But in the end, the question was whether it was worth it when there was so little commitment at the EU and national level. “Learning from the experience, which Ole and Paul have shared, we must be talking about the next steps. If EAPN presents for funding for next year, we would like to continue the idea of the national alliances. There could be a proposal to look for the extension of the funding of the old pilots but also branch out to some new alliances.” Sian then asked for feedback from the group.

**Jeanne/FR:** How did you make EAPN more visible in this process? How did you communicate about the Alliance?”

**Sian:** The EU Alliance has a separate logo and blog together as an alliance. All our alliance members have that link and theoretically contribute, although at the moment it is very uneven. We flag up new developments on the Alliance also on the EAPN site. The Alliance members are sensitive about the profile being merged too much with EAPN.

**Paul/IE:** At national level, as for example in Ireland, there is no separate logo because it is clear that EAPN is driving it.

**Ole/DK**: We used both logos that of EAPN and the European Semester Alliance. And we inform via the website.

**Katharine/UK**: What about the Spring Alliance, which also worked with environmental groups? She was wondering what the Alliance thought about the Thorpe report and what specifically went beyond what EAPN brought to the process.

**Paul/IE**: A lot of the members are already working together. Because of the size of Ireland we know the persons already, i.e. the person in environment who is responsible for 50 organizations. We are also organizing a workshop between EAPN and others which are working on water charges and its potential social impact.. We are trying to get a common understanding though we might not necessarily agree.”

**Sergio/PT**: In Portugal, we are doing more less the same. The old Alliance was dismantled and we are now rebuilding this alliance on 2020 in order to bring forward a national anti-poverty strategy to the next government. We need to ask ourselves what will be the role of these structures at the national level. In some countries they make sense; in some others it could create competition: I am wondering about the three pilots: Do you think that the alliances will be permanent?”

**Ole/DK:** For us, it was important to come into the process before the NRPs were drafted. That was why we chose the theme. We wanted to be there with an opinion before the process started.

**Paul/IE:** I think the members of the alliance like it. We did not have that much capacity to maintain an alliance. Some things get quite formalized. We are engaged with it anyway. For ourselves and our own visibility. But, we have not decided exactly on the future as more organizations are engaging.

**Sian:** The general response from the Alliance members to Ed’s report has been positive. They are very pleased with it. They have done a good job and put together a good quality report including concrete thematic areas.

**Sian:** Asked the group which countries might be interested in working on such alliances in the future?

**The following networks indicated their interest**:

UK (Scotland), Malta, Spain, Sweden, Luxembourg, Portugal, Belgium, Italy Estonia, Austria,

**Sian** underlined that a formal assessment of the Alliance project had still to be done as well as how the co-funding process has worked.

**2015 Policy Task Forces: Social Innovation and Delivering on the 20 per cent for social inclusion in the Structural Funds**

**Sian** introduced the discussion item by referring to EAPN’s work programme as submitted to the European Commission which foresees two policy task forces with a specific mandate.

**Barbara** pointed out that the mandate could be changed, but that the draft work programme had gone out for consultation before it had been sent to the Commission. She also said, that there was room for change on the part of the Commission if it was felt that the mandate needed to be changed.

**Sergio** also explained that the two proposals for the mandate of the task forces were based on the conclusions of the world café and the discussion and conclusions of the last EXCO meeting. There had been a clear signal to follow up on the implementation of the Structural Funds.

Regarding Social Innovation, he added, had also been part of the reflections at the world café. Additionally, there was a recognition on the part of the EXCO that this would be one of the themes guiding the future work of the European Commission. “Some other stakeholders are taking this on and social innovation is full of money as it is delivered as entrepreneurship.” He added that it would be very risky if EAPN failed to engage in it. He underlined that EAPN should be critical.

**Graciela** proposed to find volunteers to have some reflection on the task forces and added that there was a lot of debate on the topic. Regarding the Structural Funds, Graciela warned that even if something was written down in the OP, there was little control that it would actually be happening at the local level. She added that the money was distributed at the regional level and asked what sort of strategy we could devise and who wanted to lead on it? She suggested to draw up a scoping document with one or two people helping to draft it. This would be a good opportunity for the EOs to be involved.

**Sian** explained the set-up of the task forces: 3 meetings per TF. She added that it would be good to have a lead network for each taskforce citing the example of Belgium and the handbook on stakeholder engagement.

**Elke/BE**: supported the idea and said that it had been a very good experience for the Belgian network. The EAPN secretariat had been very helpful, too.

**Sonja/NL:** enquired which of the networks had not yet taken part in any so that the taskforces in previous years and proposed that they should become involved, The following networks indicated that they had never participated in one of the policy **TF; Czech, Croatia, Lux, France, Hungary, NL.**

**Sian:** pointed out that it was necessary to have an overview on all the Task Forces (i.e. development and communication), and also to see whether the networks had proposed members for the selection.

**Serbia** volunteered for being the lead network on Social Innovation.

**Sergio/PT**: said that he would assist in putting together the scoping notes for the taskforces and added that an integrated approach was needed mirroring our previous reflections. Letizia would follow this process very closely. He added that the Portuguese would be interested in helping to support the TF on Structural Funds.

**Graciela/ES:** underlined that there was a need to be flexible here and suggested to wait for the scoping notes.

**Letizia/IT:** queried about the timing and when EAPN expected an answer from the Commission regarding its core funding. **Barbara** responded by saying that the earliest would be the end of October, but it could also be much later. It was felt that work should start as soon as possible and could begin already using online technology.

**Paul/IE**: added that other people in the network – not necessarily EUISG members, could be involved in the TF if they had the expertise.

**Sérgio/PT**: explained that there was a recommendation that in principle it should not be the same person as in this room, but in some cases the experts were of course the members of the EUISG

**ACTION POINTS**

* **Maria/Serbia and Sérgio/Pt were proposed to work with the secretariat to draft the scoping notes by the end of the year. This would be in consultation with the Bureau in terms of the overall selection for the Task Forces in general.**

**Action on Decent Work and Living Wage Campaign**

***Chair: Sonja Leemkuil***

**Paul/IE:** presented the work of the Task Force on Decent Work, which held its three meetings from December 2013 to September 2014. The Task Force was led by EAPN Ireland, and chaired by Loraine Mulligan (SIPTU / EAPN IE), who unfortunately could not join the EU ISG meeting, and with Secretariat Support by Amana Ferro, Senior Policy Officer. **See** [**Paul’s Powerpoint**](http://www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EUISG/2014-oct3-4/8-EUISG-DWTF-presentation.ppt) for more information.

**Questions for discussion**

* Do you agree with the proposed approach?
* Is the timeframe realistic?
* How to improve the Campaign Guide?
* What other support can the Secretariat give?

**Discussion**

**Katherine / UK** - Note of caution about the Living Wage, which had started in London with religious based organizations. There are positive aspects and it is important to address businesses, but in the UK 560 employers had signed up, but banks had not nor the low-pay sector. The campaign was controversial and negative in the sense that it addressed the household wage, which caused many feminists organizations to reject it. That the issue is not directly linked to poverty and EAPN is primarily about poverty. This campaign was led by trade unions and citizens’ organizations, there is little space for EAPN. In addition, this was about an hourly wage, but the problem was often that people did not get enough hours to gain a decent income.

**Letizia / IT** - What do we need to do in countries without minimum wages? Work needs to start from the beginning, but that also meant that we need to examine the capacity to work on it.

**Gunvi / SE** – It is an ambitious and good campaign, however it a too limited approach for Sweden. The real problem in Sweden is that people are not clocking in enough hours. In addition, EU regulations make it possible for employers to take labour force from other countries with wages reflecting those of their home countries.

**Jeanne / FR** - How one would decide what a Living Wage was: a basket of goods? How would it work? What was the positions of the ETUC about this? It is courageous on the part of EAPN to tackle such a topic.

**Dag / NO** - The approach is focused on wages and competitiveness, but one needs to look also at productivity. It is the highest wage and highest productivity that go together. We can use that argument. Low salaries do not make you more competitive.

**Sérgio / PT** – Thank you to the Task Force for the interesting work. I agree with some of the worries Katherine expressed, but believe that some of it could be overcome. This is the type of work that will get EAPN high level attention. The campaign needs to adjust and be sensitive to the differences in the different countries and the work would be important for future positions of EAPN. We need to be careful to avoid confusion with other concepts appearing to be similar, such as minimum income.

**Graciela / ES** – In countries with a high employment rate, such topic is looked at as surrealistic. I want to put this on the agenda with Fintan in February, as preparation for social corridor standards. Socialist parties are proposing this in the Parliament. We need to look at the cross-overs with minimum income.

**Marina / CY** – Some of the discussions and concepts may be too confusing, such as the difference between minimum income and minimum / living wage. We can’t do the same campaign in every country, but we can translate the concept and adapt common tools to different national realities.

**Vincent / MT** - Minimum income is an onus on the Government, while living wage is an onus on the employer. There needs to be a difference between the two. Any question of salary is related to production. Secondly, they are also debating if employees play football during working hours, they should not be paid and if on a Monday morning somebody comes to work drunk, they should stay home. You have to know what the entrepreneurs want.

**Katherine / UK** - Trade unions back the Living Wage because it could provide better wages, but we should not take the pressure off the legal side. In London the Living Wage is 8 pounds. Trade unions are very worried and therefore my question is why are we not joining the trade unions, why we are not supporting them? I cannot see why EAPN needs to take a lead”

**Graciela / ES** – We should spend an hour at the next meeting, with Fintan, to discuss and explore further the contrasting visions.

**Paul / IE** – The idea of the living wage is about awareness raising on the hourly wage, and all the other issues around it, in particular about precarious work. In Ireland NGOs have set an hourly wage 3 Euros above minimum wage. The fact is that pay is much too low. Next EUISG needs to have a discussion on this.

**Amana / Secretariat** – The impetus to work on this came from the Oslo General Assembly in 2012, where there was widespread enthusiasm and support to work on this. When the Task Force was proposed, together with the scoping note detailing the work, it received the highest number of votes. The Task Force worked on proposals as it was mandated, but could not answer all the issues. However, 98% of the issues you raised were discussed in the Task Force, and answers can be found in the two documents – the Concept and Feasibility Note, sand the Campaign Guide. EU ISG members’ input is more than welcome.

This Task Force is absolutely not proposing that everybody runs a rigid, formal, resource-intensive Living Wage campaign, dictated from above and imposed on everybody in the same way. It is about providing some common tools to raise awareness in 2015, each of us in our countries, and then evaluate to see if, and how, we take it forward. The Task Force kept the EAPN work on minimum income in mind at all times, and Fintan attended parts of the Task Force to help with the cross-overs. Indeed, incentives to work should be maintained, and a minimum wage (not to mention a living one) needs to be higher than minimum income. There should be a positive hierarchy. Trade unions were part of the Task Force – from Ireland and Scotland – but, as this is still an internal process, it has not been externalized to actors such as the ETUC.

**ACTION POINTS**

* **Amana to send again out the two deliverables from the Task Force (Concept and Feasibility Note, and Campaign Guide), and members to send input in comments and track changes.**
* **To set time aside (1h) next meeting to discuss these issues in more depth, possibly with Fintan’s contribution (to be seen, as the meeting is in Rome).**

**Next Meeting**

* The next meeting will be held in Rome on the 6 and 7 February.

**Wrapping Up**

**Sonja / NL** – The EU ISG will come back to these issues at our next meeting. Thank you all for participating, for your commitment and work, and see you next year in Rome!