

# Pillar 1 of MASS

Influencing Government for better policies – advocacy, lobbying and policy-making

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(EAPN) Ireland

# EAPN Ireland

- **Founded 1990**
  - at the same time as EAPN (Europe)
- **Advocacy is the centre of our work and reason for existence as a network**
  - *“To put the fight against poverty at the heart of Irish and European policy*
  - *“To empower members to understand and influence EU and Irish policy-making as it affects poverty”*



# Who we work with

- **Members:**
  - National anti-poverty organisations/NGOs (most active in regular policy work)
  - Local organisations (less active)
  - individuals
- **Alliances led by EAPN Ireland**
  - Community Platform (30 national anti-poverty and pro-equality organisations) – regular liaison with Government Departments
  - Minimum Income Network (linked to European network)
  - Semester Alliance (linked to European Alliance)
- **Other alliances on many issues**



# Management and policy

## Board (Exco) members

## Local groups

Longford (Women)

Offaly (Travellers)

Galway (homeless)

Dublin (Community)

Dublin (Empl partnership)

Clare (Community)

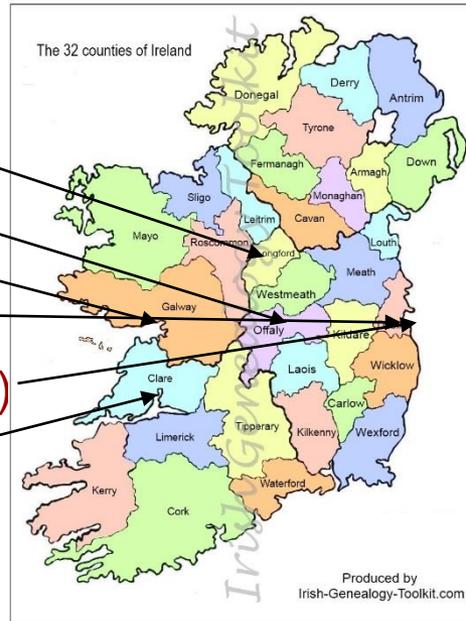
## National groups

Zimbabwe community

Homeless organisation

Older people

Trade union



## Policy Group (Europe 2020)

(all national networks or organisations)

Age Action

Trade Union unemployed centres

Disability Federation

Unemployed

Traveller Movement

Migrant Rights Centre

National Adult Literacy Agency

National Youth Council

National Women's Council

Lone parents' org

Largest trade union



# What we try to influence

- EAPN (Europe and Ireland) long-term priorities, e.g:
  - Europe 2020 (and Irish NRP)
  - Platform Against Poverty (and Irish NAP Incl)
  - Structural Funds (and Irish ESF/NDP)
  - National annual budget
- Urgent actions or opportunities, e.g:
  - Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (Irish rapporteur for European Parliament)
  - Funding for EMIN project (Irish convenor of ALDE group in committee)
- Issues raised by members, e.g.:
  - Gap in funding for PEACE programmes
- Supporting campaigns led by others, e.g.:
  - Financial Transaction Tax



# Who we try to influence

- **Key civil servants (Government officials)**
  - Social Ministry, Taoiseach's (PM) etc.
- **Politicians**
  - Ministers and advisors
  - Parliamentary Committees
  - Opposition spokespeople
  - Individual politicians close to our views
- **MEPs**
  - Especially those on EMPL committee, but all MEPs important



# Opportunities for influence

- **National policies**
  - Regular cycle – Budget, national plans etc.
  - Legislation
  - Campaigns for e.g. asylum seekers' rights
  - Responses to consultations
- **Formation of EU policy**
  - Through inputs to EAPN/EUISG
  - Irish officials on Working Groups and Ministers on Council
  - MEPs on key issues
- **Irish Implementation of EU policies**
  - Structural Funds
  - Europe 2020/Platform Against Poverty



# How we build our messages involving members

- Drafting now done mainly by staff or one or two key members
  - Previously much stronger inputs by members)
- Policies approved by Board, policy group (mostly national, organisations) and, where practical members
  - Members much less willing to engage than in the past)
- Campaigns involve calls for messages from members to politicians



# How we involve people experiencing poverty in drafting and lobbying

## Regional training and consultation workshops

- Our members are mostly organisations representing or working with people experiencing poverty
- Usually half day training + half day consultation
- Sometimes mix of people experiencing poverty and full-time workers, sometimes focus groups of people in poverty
- All regional or local meetings hosted by a local member group and run by EAPN Ireland

## ➤ Regional workshops to feed into policy papers

- Every year, we run workshops to prepare for the Government's Social Inclusion Forum – this year, 10 regional seminars with over 240 people, more than at the forum
- Special 'rounds' of regional trainings/ consultations on particular topics (e.g. employment, European elections etc.)



# Strengths and weaknesses

## ➤ Strengths

- Messages from the ground are powerful
- Alliances with other social NGOs and other allies (environmental, unions etc)
- Long term accumulation of knowledge
- Access and credibility with Irish politicians and officials

## ➤ Weaknesses

- Members on the ground less capacity for involvement now, and more disillusioned
- Large number of formal processes, but less impact on policy
- Less willingness of Government to listen
- Reduced overall EAPN Ireland resources



# Some submissions in 2013

- To the **Department (Ministry) of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister)**: on the Irish National Reform Programme (NRP) 2103 Update to the European Commission on the 5 Europe 2020 targets, including the poverty target.
- To the **Troika** (for several meetings) on Ireland's report
- To the **Parliamentary Committee on Social Protection** on poverty
- To the **European Parliament rapporteur** on the Fund For aid to the most deprived
- To the Department of **Social Protection** on the new integrated welfare and employment service INTREO (Social Welfare, FAS Employment Services and Community Welfare Officers Working Together.)
- To the **Minister for Social Protection** on the annual budget
- To the Department of **Social Protection** and other Departments involved on the implementation of the policy paper *Pathways to Work*:
- To the Department of **Finance** on Ireland's 'Partnership Agreement' for the next round of Structural Funds and Rural Development Programme
- To the **Tax and Welfare Advisory Group** on welfare to work issues.
- To the **Rural Development Programme 2014-2020**
- To the **European Commission** and the Irish Government on the Social Investment Package (SIP)
- **European Social Fund**: EAPN Ireland prepared a briefing for the Community sector in Ireland, organized a small workshop on the new round of funding and made several submissions to the Department of Education and Skills on the ESF Partnership Agreement
- **National Social Report and Europe 2020**: We supplied briefing for Irish National Expert for her report on Ireland

