**Proposals for Policy Task Forces 2016**

**Background Document and Proposal Form**

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| **Name/Title of Proposed Task Force:**  ***Poverty and Social Exclusion as Violation of Human Rights*** |
| **Name/Contact details of member/s proposing TF:**  *Ole Meldgaard, mail:* [*ole@kofoedsskole.dk*](mailto:ole@kofoedsskole.dk) |
| **Objective of the Task Force, justification and desired output**  People who live in poverty and social exclusion are often also victims of societal structural discrimination, caused by political decisions or an absence of intervention, while poverty itself is a considered by some authors as a form of structural violence. The existence of poverty and social exclusion inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights. A human rights approach to poverty calls for a paradigm shift in how we see and address poverty. It suggests that poverty is not simply inevitable, nor can it be blamed on the poor. It seeks to identify how and where poverty is created by human actions or policy choices, rather than by nameless economic forces. A human rights approach views poverty not as a question of fate, but rather as an issue of justice. With a rights-based approach, we must investigate and demand accountability for the actions (or failures to act) that produce, perpetuate, and exacerbate poverty. The human rights framework also focuses on empowerment – giving voice and power to those who are poor and otherwise unable to claim their rights. A particular focus on social rights will help to ensure that Governments address poverty reduction as a priority. With this Task Force, EAPN wants to elaborate on the relation between poverty and human rights in Europe, to deepen its understanding of poverty and social exclusion as a violation of human rights, and to strengthen its capacity to act against poverty and human rights violations.  **Main objective/s:**   * In the fight against poverty, to operationalise human rights as recognised by the international community, in particular by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 9 of the EU Treaty, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, other United Nations conventions, Council of Europe conventions, ILO conventions, and others * To understand and define how poverty and social exclusion can be treated as a human rights issue and make this understanding operational in EAPN’s fight against poverty and social exclusion * To identify poverty and social exclusion within a human rights framework * To develop EAPN’s capacity to work on poverty and social exclusion as human rights issues * To gather examples of how human rights instruments have been used to combat poverty and social exclusion by the EAPN membership and others * To strengthen EAPN members’ capacity to contribute to the general discourse and debate about poverty as a breach of human rights, including to reports which Member States are required to submit to United Nations bodies and to European institutions. * To consider how members of EAPN can use international and national human rights law to progress the fight against poverty * To consider how members of NNs and EOs can communicate better on these issues through social media   **Reference to Strategic Plan (2012-16):**  Objective 1.1: EAPN will work to ensure that the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Platform against Poverty and the Social Inclusion strategy (Social OMC) deliver progress to effectively mainstream social concerns and to reduce poverty and inequality.  Objective 1.2: EAPN will work to support its members to effectively engage in public debates and national and European policy making, on poverty, social exclusion and inequality.  Objective 1.3: EAPN will seek to engage and contribute to alliances for an alternative model of social and sustainable development that puts people and planet first.  Objective 2.2: EAPN will provide opportunities for mutual exchange between its members to ensure a transfer of knowledge, experience and learning on practices and policies in the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequalities*.*  **Justification:**  Europe is facing the worst human rights crisis since the cold war, stated a report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in 2014 (*State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Europe.*) EAPN sees poverty and social exclusion as a violation of human rights, while the financial, economic and social crisis in Europe, and especially the way they have been dealt with, has shown that respect for social human rights is not an obstacle to progress, but part of the solution to the crisis. The promotion of human rights needs to be carried out on a specific and correct understanding of poverty and social exclusion as violation of rights, and an advanced knowledge of how to act to respect, protect and fulfil those rights. The rights-based approach to poverty reduction needs a stronger and more prominent position in the European fight against poverty and social exclusion. While EAPN has always championed a rights-based approach, it is high-time this approach were consolidated in a consensual, reference document, to be used at national and EU level as a foundation for our stance on the fight against poverty and social exclusion. EAPN is also the European partner of Dignity International, who has experience and expertise in addressing poverty within international rights frameworks, so this is an asset that could be built upon by the Task Force.  **Main output/s:**  A Toolkit on *Using human rights concepts and instruments to combat* *overty and Social Exclusion* for members of EAPN, outlining the concepts and operationalising them, enabling EAPN members to better build their arguments, engage in debates and use the human rights instruments in a practical way. |
| **Membership of Task Force:**  The Task Force will be led by the proposer (EAPN Denmark – Ole Meldgaard), supported by the EAPN Secretariat (Amana Ferro), and include 5 additional full members. Of these, there should be 4 representatives from National Networks, and preferably one from a European Organisation in membership of EAPN. Selection criteria include: expertise in social policy, experience in working on human rights and on implementing a rights-based approach in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, knowledge of the main international human rights frameworks to be analysed, legal background or experience in taking legal action in the matter. During the selection process, geographical and gender balance will be observed as much as possible. It would be desirable for the Task Force to include one person with direct experience of poverty. |
| **The Structure/Working method and Timeline for the work of the Task Force:**  (Please indicate how the TF should be organized, number of meetings and initial timeline)  **Timeline**  From April 2016 to December 2016  The Task Force would last approximately nine months and will meet two times. Task Force members will also work in between meetings, via email and other means (Skype etc). The final deliverable(s) will be drafted by the members of the Task Force, with Secretariat support for the finalized product.    *Before the first meeting*  Select literature on a human rights approach to poverty and social exclusion, by Task Force members, to be read by all members before the first meeting.  *First meeting (April-May 2016)*  Clarify the scope of the Task Force and aim, main objectives, output and target group, by all Task Force members; decide the detailed structure and main content of the Toolkit, and the methodology for developing it; decide timeline, delegate responsibilities to TF members, agree process till the next meeting. An outline of the discussion will be recorded in the minutes and circulated after the meeting.  *Between the first and the second meeting*  Produce a first draft of the Toolkit, in accordance with what has been agreed at the meeting.  *Second meeting (Autumn 2016)*  Presentation and discussion of the draft Toolkit, with in-depth comments. Prepare the presentation for the EU ISG. Discuss how to best use the Toolkit, dissemination etc.  *After the second meeting*  Collect written feedback from Task Force members, EU ISG members, and Secretariat, integrating all received feedback. Agree finalized version. |
| **Indicative proposal re follow up**  If possible to do so at no-cost, organize a small event with participants from EAPN, Council of Europe, National Human Rights Institutions and others on how to promote respect at national level for social human rights. A small capacity building session for EAPN members, based on the Toolkit, could also be envisaged, as part of an EU ISG and/or EXCO meeting, or via online methodologies. The EU ISG could propose additional follow-up activities, relating to how to better mainstream the human rights approach in our daily work and discourse.  Literature (examples):   * <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/PovertyStrategiesen.pdf> * <https://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/povertyreductionguidelines.html> * <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/workshops/principles-guidelines-hr.pdf> * <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/dg-publications-for-website/poverty-reduction-and-human-rights-practice-note/HRPN_(poverty)En.pdf> * <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/PovertyReductionen.pdf> * <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/NHRI/1950-UNDP-UHCHR-Toolkit-LR.pdf> * <http://www.cesr.org/downloads/CESR%20Briefing%20-%20Human%20Rights%20and%20Poverty%20-%20Draft%20December%202009.pdf>   *See also*: EAPN Ireland Handbook on *Using a Human Rights Approach to Achieve Social Inclusion and Equality* (2007): <http://www.eapn.ie/eapn/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/handbook-on-using-a-human-rights-approach-to-achieve-social-inclusion-and-equality.pdf>.  *See also:* EQUINET- European Network of Equality Bodies, *Equality Bodies Contributing to the Protection, Respect, and Fulfillment of Economic and Social Rights* (2015): <http://www.equineteurope.org/IMG/pdf/economic_and_social_rights_electronic-3.pdf> |