**EU INCLUSION STRATEGIES GROUP**

***17-18 June 2016***

*Minutes*

**Attendance:** Elke Vandermeerschen (EAPN BE), Douhomir Minev (EAPN BG), Stanislav Mrozek (EAPN CZ), Mart-Peeter Erss (EAPN EE), Jiri Sironen (EAPN FI), Jeanne Dietrich (EAPN FR), Juergen Schneider (EAPN DE), Johanna Laszlo (EAPN HU), Thorbera Fjolnisdottir (EAPN IC), Paul Ginnell (EAPN IE), Marina Marchetti (EAPN IT), Norberts Snarskis (EAPN LV), Jekaterina Navicke (EAPN LT), Robert Urbe (EAPN LU), Maja Staleska (EAPN MK), Joe XXX (EAPN MT), Sonja Leemkuil (EAPN NL), Dag Westerheim (EAPN NO), Paula Cruz (EAPN PT), Iris Alexe (EAPN RO), Marija Babovic (EAPN SR), Slavomira Marekova (EAPN SK), Graciela Malgesini (EAPN ES), Jimmie Trevett (EAPN SE), Carla McCormack (EAPN UK), Stephan Burger (Eurodiaconia)

**EAPN Staff:** Sian Jones, Amana Ferro, Viola Shahini, Rebecca Lee, Bianca Ferrari

**Apologies:** Eugen Bierling-Wagner (EAPN AT), Marina Koukou (EAPN CY), Per K Larssen (EAPN DK)

**No answer:** Maria Marinakou (EAPN GR), Marco Aliotta (CARITAS Europa), Agata D’Addato (Eurochild)

1. **Introduction**

The meeting debuted with a tour de table. The **Agenda** was approved. The **Minutes** were approved, and the **Action Points** were all done, or in progress. Everything in the **Work Programme** has either been delivered, or is on track, and all links can be found in the document, which is available on the **Members’ Room**. There is a new login procedure for the Members’ Room, where everybody has individual login details.

The **Contact Book** was presented again to members – it is an easy to use tool that includes a short fiche on each EU ISG member (name, network, areas of expertise and interest, reasons for joining the EU ISG, hobbies, photograph). This tool should help members know each other better, as well as more easily identify partners in other countries. An updated version will be presented each meeting, including the actual participants in that meeting.

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***If you haven’t created your logic profile for the Members’ Room on the EAPN website, please do so, and contact Rebecca Lee in the EAPN Europe team if anything is unclear*** ([rebecca.lee@eapn.eu](mailto:rebecca.lee@eapn.eu))
* ***Those who have not done so yet, please send your information and photo to Viola Shahini in the EAPN Europe team*** ([policy@eapn.eu](mailto:policy@eapn.eu))

1. **Evaluation and follow-up of the Policy Conference**

* The working groups in the morning were very good, as was the introduction by Sergio; we are looking forward to receiving the PowerPoint; it is a pity that Allan Larsson couldn’t come;
* The morning session was very important, especially for new members; it seems that we used to do more activism before, like the human ring around the European Parliament – maybe we can go back to such actions? Vicky Kokkori’s intervention was very disappointing; maybe we can consider a different methodology, to get such institutional speakers out of their comfort zone of just answering standard questions;
* Maria Joao Rodrigues MEP had a very interesting intervention; what we’d like to see is how concretely to help countries raise minimum income levels in countries, as the European Union can’t do direct cash transfers to Member States to support this;
* In Slovakia, we have payments for people who take care of cows and ensure their wellbeing; cows have rights, but no responsibilities, unlike people – yet there is not enough money for people;
* Rather than us inviting decision-makers to our meetings, it should be the other way around; we only get one or two decision-makers, we should get the institutions to invite us, for instance to a Parliament hearing, so that all of them can listen to us;
* The conference went really well and everybody’s input was very good; debates were interesting, even if the time was short; Vicky Kokkori was blatantly ignoring the issues and was giving institutional answers – surprised that people didn’t react more to her lack of content and empathy; she didn’t inspire a lot of faith in the Social Pillar;
* We keep hearing the same things, the same promises, but nothing is happening; we should rethink the way we are doing things, let’s try something new, maybe then they will listen to us more;
* We are sceptical that the Social Pillar will make a lot of difference; Vicky Kokkori wasn’t really listening to us, she was being defensive and recited prepared answers instead;
* We did a legal opinion on the minimum income directive and it has been intensely studied in the Commission, but they are saying the legal base is wrong; however, it is a question of political will, things are being done for migrants that have no legal base.

1. **Europe 2020 and the European Semester**

Update on latest developments

**Sian / EAPN Europe** reminded participants of the European Semester process. She stressed that the Country Reports are very important and drive the CSR process (this is information the staff received orally from the Commission, it is not transparent). She then provided a summary of the CSR analysis, which effectively conclude the European Semester. On October 15, the budget review will take place for the countries in the Eurozone. In the meantime, the Commission is conducting bilateral meetings and fact finding missions in countries – members should try to get involved with that.

Exchange on members’ action and participation

**Jeanne / FR** – The French representation of the EC organised a meeting about the CSRs and we attended. This is the second time we engage with that type of meeting. No poverty CSR for France, because they consider we already have a 4 year plan. Housing is a key problem, there is not enough accommodation, and it is not affordable.

**Jiri / FI** – This year we were more engaged in this type of lobbying. We published our own recommendations and sent them to the Government. We had no CSR on poverty. We did a press release when the CSRs came out. We met the European Semester Officer, we can also influence national policy – it is not just about the EU. The Country Report is very useful for us, we can use it to get a clearer picture of what is happening and what is planned.

**Joe / MT** – The trend is to undermine poverty, but this is addressed by moving people from welfare benefits into subsidised work. Our work at the moment is more on the organisation of a platform, so that EAPN Malta is able to coordinate the smaller organisations.

**Graciela / ES** – The Country Report is very detailed, but it is not binding.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – If you look at the executive summary of the Country Report, that gives a hint for what might be in the final CSRs

**Paula / PT** – EAPN PT was not consulted on the NRP. The Government consulted CARITAS though, who has similar ideas. The NRP is quite social, there are a lot of social measures. They speak about a national programme to fight child poverty. But the CSRs were discouraging. In-work poverty and child poverty in the Preamble, but no CSR on it. So we have a social Country Report, a quite social NRP, but the CSRs don’t include poverty.

**Paul / IE** – All submissions to the NRP were published on the website, and EAPN Ireland was involved in three on them. Very few came from outside civil society – business interests, and one regional authority. The macroeconomic CSR is always there and always a threat, hanging over the others.

**Slavomira / SK** – People who make decisions are far away from people experiencing poverty, CSRs are disconnected from reality.

**Mart / EE** – The CSRs do not reflect the real issues. For instance, the gender pay gap is not as big as Eurostat says, the statistics are flawed.

NRP Report – Questionnaire and process

**Sian / EAPN Europe** presented the NRP questionnaire, which builds on the one used last year, but was simplified, with several questions merged, to make it easier and more agile for members.

**Robert / LU** – The Scoreboard is a little too rigid, very black or white. Sometimes answers are more complex than a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or ‘I don’t know’.

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***The Scoreboard will include two additional columns, on “Partially agree” and “Partially disagree”, to make the analysis more nuanced.***
* ***Members should fill in the NRP questionnaire and send it to Sian Jones in the EAPN Europe team (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***) by the 1st of July.***

Working Groups: National Exchange on NRPs and CSRs

Please see the separate document of notes for detailed feedback from the Working Groups.

Feedback from Working Groups

**Group 1: UK, IE, MK, IC, NO, SK, LT**

**General view:**

* Lack of consultation at the national level
* Focus on macroeconomic issues, decrease deficit
* No much focus on poverty
* Employment as a solution of poverty, but no quality of jobs

**Priorities:**

* Shift tackling deficit to tackling poverty, inequality and child poverty
* Create investment in social housing
* Better balance between economic and social policies
* Impact assessments at the governmental level
* Move toward universalism
* Increase support for disabled people
* Increase investments in community services
* High energy and housing costs are another issue that needs more attention
* Integrated approaches to tackle poverty

**Group 2: BE, NL, ES, HU, BG, FR, LU, MT, EE, LV, RO**

**Changes needed:**

* Energy process more efficient
* Adequate min income is needed, ES, HU, is missing
* In work poverty not enough addressed in majority of states, ES and HU
* Forced volunteered work: workfare (HU, NL, BE) local authorities try to impose it, push for it.

**Recommendation:**

* Stop cuts and invest in social areas (pension and health systems)
* Social affordable housing and not only social housing
* A real structured dialogue in the European Semester
* Invite European Semester Officer to our meetings

**Group 3 : PT, SE, FI, DE, SR, HR, CZ**

There was a process of participation but not enough (main problem being government alternation).

**Key messages to put forward**

* Better participation and engagement of NGOs and people on these processes
* Shift focus from austerity measures towards poverty and social exclusion issues
* Poverty prevention is quite good (CZ, FI, SE), but for those who fell in poverty there is no adequate policy.
* Wealth distribution and inequality: adequate minimum income

Discussion on workfare

**Graciela / ES** – When a person is unemployed he or she gets benefits, and they are forced to volunteer as a way of activation, and if they don’t do it the benefits are cut. Local authorities push for it and have a lot of power in some countries such ES, IT.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – The problem about workfare is that they are not being paid, people are forced to work for nothing.

**Jiri / FI –** Before, FI had a very generous state which gave subsidiaries but now they are cutting the money and people are doing the same work as before.

**Paula / PT** – We have the same measure in PT, called ‘social use for work’: people can work and be paid for the lunch, but there are some organizations that don’t want to pay for lunch so people go back home for lunch and come back to work again. If people do not accept these terms they are going to remain without social assistance.

**Jekaterina / LT** – Similar occurrences also in LV. One policy was public work, which has negative impact on the employability of people. Public work programme will be transferred to municipalities, because it is useful work and they don’t even have to pay for it.

**Norberts / LV** – There is a position paper in LV on this topic. It is a big problem in LV. State pays a minimum hour wage, workers spend a lot of hours going around but only the working hour is counted and payed in minimum wage.

**Dag / NO –** Itreduces people’s chances to get a real job, there are no jobs for low-skilled workers.

**Johanna / HU –** Now the workfare system in HU exists for 10 years. It was said this was tailored for low skilled workers or for those who are outside the labour market, to help these people find a new job. Workfare only creates slavery work and in HU by now there is the tendency that even people with university degrees are in the system. Rural municipalities in some case lack money and they fire their employees to get them back under the workfare system. In this way they can pay them less. In one report done in HU in the 2014 was found that 10-13% can’t find a job in the open market due to these programs (because they are not allowed to go to the interviews) so many people are stuck in that and is becoming a cause for extreme poverty.

1. **Task Force Updates**

Poverty and Human Rights Task Force

**Amana / EAPN Europe** – Task Force members were selected in March. A lot of time was then spent trying to find a date for everybody to be there, still not everyone will be there, BE Network cannot make it, hopefully she can send her inputs before the meeting. The first meeting will take place on the 8th of July and the second meeting is foreseen in autumn. There is a comprehensive list of mandatory readings for member to familiarize themselves with the main human rights frameworks we will be working on. The mandate of the Task Force is to prepare a Toolkit to equip members with the knowledge to better frame poverty as a breach of human rights, to consolidate the rights-based approach. Do not forget that there is a page for every Task Force on the Members’ Room, which is updated regularly, and you can find there minutes, background documents, agendas etc. Alternatively, should you like to know more about our work, please don’t hesitate to drop me a line.

Migration, Asylum Seekers and Refugees Task Force

**Sian / EAPN Europe** - This Task Force is led by EAPN CY and PICUM. All of those who applied are in, due to geographic coverage and due to the complexity of the issue (there are two out of seven European Organizations, so they don’t bear extra costs, but this would be reconsidered if the meetings were to be held outside Brussels). The first meeting will be held around mid-September (26th September has now been agreed). The aim is to produce a briefing as the basis for a capacity building session with the EUISG, then to develop a position paper with key messages as part of an advocacy strategy. The work will start in 2016 and continue into 2017.

1. **Follow-Up on Previous Task Forces**

Monitoring the 20% of ESF dedicated to poverty and social exclusion

**Sian / Secretariat –** Sali Guntín is the person who is attending meetings of the structured dialogue and she has made reports on what is happening in these meeting. She needs to be able to get structured input and feedback to the groups. We also need to look at how we follow up with the work on monitoring the 20% on poverty and participation, now that the projects are being launched. Social Platform is circulating a questionnaire, but the timing is bad, and it shouldn’t duplicate our work. Is there interest in repeating the Barometer, in a shorter form? We also should be thinking how we can contribute to the Mid-term Review of the Multiannual Financial Framework.

**Paula / PT**: Very good work was done on the Barometer and EAPN PT is very interested in continuing this work. It would be useful to have a small group to work on this. There is a questionnaire available, and it is important to look at it, there are a lot of questions which are not relevant anymore 🡪 change these questions, make clearer questions about the implementation of the funds, on rational issues too.

The following members also showed interest in working with EAPN PT on a follow up**:** RO, PT, HU, BG, SP, FI, LV, DEwere the networks that were interested in joining the Structural Funds follow up.

**Graciela / ES** – The EU gives funds to each Member State, 20% of these funds are aimed in reducing poverty and social exclusion, and we are interested in knowing how are these funds redistributed. Even if you don’t follow up this issue at your national/regional level, at least be aware that such funds do exist in your countries.

**Action Points**

***EAPN PT will circulate a draft revision of the Barometer and communicate with the group of members from the existing task force and those who indicated interest: ES, RO, PT, HU, BG, FI, LV, IE and DE.***

***The group will also liaise with Sali on the Structured Dialogue group.***

***Sian will liaise with Social Platform on input to the Mid-term review of MAFF.***

1. **Access to Services: Housing and Health**

**Presentation on draft report by Viola Shahini, Policy Intern in the EAPN Europe office**

See PowerPoint presentation

Discussion on the Report

**Sonja / NL**: This is an important report, but we’ve only just seen it. We need time.

**Paul / IE** – The second message on privatisation is true, but needs to be more nuanced. In IE, there was a shift away from social housing to private rented, now there is a crisis in housing and they have understood that it was a mistake to stop building social housing. The state has the responsibility to provide housing. They realize now that there is a responsibility of the state to provide affordable housing and they can’t rely on the housing market.

**Carla / UK –** This is a problem but not reflected in the NRP. The same trend is also in UK. There is more focus on the private rental market, but this doesn’t necessarily meet the need of more people in poverty. In Scotland there is a promise to build 50 000 affordable homes. We are moving away from privatization in Scotland.

Feedback from buzz groups

**IC, HR, UK, NL**

* Privatisation of public services has increased poverty and reduces access
* A lot of the social housing is in very bad quality condition. Social housing must be affordable and there needs to be a cap on private rents.
* We need to make sure that all different types of housing is accessible, affordable - thinking also of old age, disability and linked to financial support for people who cannot afford it.
* Increased investment is needed in health and housing, and also innovate approaches. An example is from Amsterdam where housing is given to students to live free if they look after older people.
* In the areas where there is a lack of affordable housing, governments should give land to non for profit associations to build social housing.
* Free healthcare for everyone, in all aspects – ie opticians and dental treatment.

**LT, PT, RO**

We made comments specifically about the report.

* We should make more concrete proposals, putting the main points first ie Rights based, integrated and universal.
* The text could be better consolidated, for example there are key messages and recommendations in the middle, with the EAPN position, then on the last pages there are policy solutions. Suggest to integrate policy solutions / recommendations and EAPN position together.
* On the last page, these proposals are nicely formulated, short and precise.
* In the introduction, make more reference to which countries participated in it.
* Services should be seen as a driver not only for growth, but also aimed at improving well-being and for social investment.

**DE, MK, LU, MT, EURODIACONIA**

* Integrate life cycle approach explicitly into the integrated approach. The support must be timely and uninterrupted. The integrated approach is good for the user, and is more efficient and effective, which can reduce overall needs. It’s a win win.
* Dialogue structures between different service providers as a way to facilitate this integrated approach are essential.
* Missing: putting user at the centre of service provision, giving users a stronger voice is a key aspect of quality of service provision and a right-based approach. Need to give users more choice and control.

**FR, FI, NO, EE, SK**

Generally, the messages are too generic to be used.

* Rented housing is not just for poor people. If we want to avoid ghettos, we need housing for all/everybody. This is essential to boost social mobility.
* Money to improve access to housing goes to the wrong pockets (to the owners and not to the poor people) 🡪 use this money to build social housing.
* More support should also be given to subsidise loans and to help avoid over-indebtedness
* Need to promote some changes in social housing, ie issue of transfer and choice. In most of the cases social housing depends mostly in municipalities.
* We can use this work in a concrete lobbying, send to European Semester Officer, this is our position on it with concrete measures.

**LV, HU, BE, IE**

* There is an ambiguous role EU is playing, national and regional authorities are competent for this services and not the EU. ie CSRs on housing and macroeconomic recommendations have a huge impact on services.
* Access to healthcare: CSRs are focused mostly on cost-efficiency – but the issue of how is important. (ie in Ireland’s case to use more generic medicines that save costs, and we would support this).
* Universal system exists but are being undermined. Also the terminology is crucial. We need to translate what universality means (geographic, types of services and services for whom).
* There are enormous differences between the different systems, and there is not enough information at EU level. We need to recognize this and it is necessary to have a progressive recommendation from the Commission.
* We had an important discussion about want affordable or free. We concluded we want free healthcare services (full health coverage), at the point of entry. But we need to define what this means – eg aesthetic surgery? The ILO Social Protection Floor document might be an inspiring basis for discussion on pathways to progress.
* Important to see also the overlap with energy poverty and lack of access to water.

**SE, ES**

* We have problems with the 2nd message, there is something missing
* Clarify the difference between privatization and marketization – we need to defend also non-for-profit services. Also between social and affordable – ie on the private market.
* Promote social economy in housing – maintenance, modelling, design and repair and link it with services provided.
* Service in rural areas, services are not available in many of these areas – we should rethink how these could be provided by mobile or on-line consultation?
* Access to internet is also important.
* Life cycle vs life course (use the second, better). It is not just about life stages, but chosen pathways ie life course covers age and personal pathways.

**Graciela / ES** – We have a practice called the “Green Book” in rural areas, it gathers all the social problems that are neglected.

**ACTION POINT**

***Members are asked to provide the following:***

***- Input in track changes and comments of ALL networks to the WHOLE report***

***- Countries who sent a fiche please check that your input is taken on board***

***- Countries who haven’t, have an opportunity to insert their country initials where they deem it appropriate***

***- Quotes and life stories from people experiencing poverty***

***- Feedback on the key messages.***

***to Viola Shahini (***[***policy@eapn.eu***](mailto:policy@eapn.eu) ***) by the 1st of July.***

1. **Evaluation of the Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth**

Participating networks: BE, IE, PT, DE, FI

**Amana / EAPN Europe –** There is a [page on the EAPN website](http://www.eapn.eu/6806-2/), bringing together EAPN’s participation at the Annual Convention. There were some workshops during the morning session: one was on active inclusion, also a workshop on upward social convention and fighting poverty (Elke was rapporteur) where key messages from PEP were presented, and a PEP participant from the Czech Republic was present and spoke. There was another on the European Semester (Paul was speaker) and another one on refugees and migrants. Afternoon was about side-events, where EAPN organized one on Structural Funds, presenting the key findings of the Task Force (Fátima Veiga). Another one was on the European Pillar of Social Rights, organised by the European Trade Union Confederation (Amana participated in an open discussion). EAPN President Sérgio Aires spoke in the closing plenary. The Convention has changed, it is not on poverty anymore; it doesn’t measure the progress on the poverty target. It instead focuses on social policy more broadly. One of the reason EC said was ‘it is very expensive and we cannot spend 1 million euro only to talk about poverty for 3 days’. Even though the format was reduced, still EAPN was quite visible and managed to have good participation. However, it doesn’t measure progress on the poverty target, and shifts the focus from poverty to inclusive growth which concerns us.

**Sian / EAPN Europe –** One of the problems was that the EC got this together in 6 weeks, normally it is planned over one year. Some of you missed the meeting this year. This year it was organized very late and most Governments didn’t get a chance to properly prepare participation. Be aware that as it’s organized through national delegations you need to have good contacts with your governments. You are then funded by then.

**Jürgen / DE:** It was a good conference. We had a good workshop. The side event on ESF could have been better. The powerpoint from EAPN PT was too long and EESC didn’t say anything.

**Jiri / FI:**  The Convention was quite ok, the discussions went well. It was a typical upper level seminar, representing white men’s poverty. There was not enough direct representation of people in poverty.

**Elke / BE** - In general, positive impressions. Workshops were enjoyable and very well prepared. I was called only the day before to be rapporteur. I thought they would try to control my report, but they didn’t. So this is good and we were able to give EAPN Messages. Debates were interesting too. I agree that we shouldn’t be spending so much money on bla bla. The real issue is the status of the conference. It’s supposed to be part of the EPAP? What status do the conclusions have and the results.

**Paul / IE –** Before, it was a much higher profile event, with the President of the Commission and the European Parliament, but it never really looked at progress on poverty and why/why not. This year it was back to a lower level, back to Thyssen and pillar of social rights. Back to employment as the solution. Europe 2020 wasn’t mentioned, although Poverty was. It doesn’t look like we are seeing a real impact or progress made in Europe 2020 target of reducing poverty, although there were some good discussions in the workshops with an attempt to be more participative. This year the big focus was on the Pillar of the Social Rights (Allan Larsson), employment being a solution. Europe 2020 is hardly mentioned, the same for the poverty issue. Impressions: interesting event; proposals, recommendation and outcomes looked positive, but then everything went away. How does this influence policy? Did they really use this in targeting poverty? In Ireland, the social inclusion forum has followed a similar process of lowering status, but we still try to hang onto it.

**ACTION POINT**

* ***The Secretariat will feed back the concerns to the Commission and try to get engagement to improve for next year***.

1. **Member Exchange: What’s on top? Members’ priorities?**

**Elke / BE** opened the session by welcoming everybody and explaining the first part of the work, which is meant to give members a space to share their concerns from the national level and exchange on their realities, priorities, and projects for common actions. Members worked in buzz groups and focused on the following questions:

1. What is the priority for your network right now, and how are you dealing with it?
2. Do you already have experience with direct action at the national level, were you successful, what can we learn from each other?
3. Which actions would be useful / have an impact, what is feasible or not for the EU ISG, as it’s not always easy to have a coordinated action?

Feedback from buzz groups

**FI, HR, UK, PT, RO, SE**

Most networks have as priority to get more visibility and increase participation, as well as strengthening the network. Finland is focussing also on increasing PEP engagement. FI & HR support demonstrations against welfare cuts as well as online campaigns. Organising events around the 17 of October is also an option. Some networks engage in street actions – UK / Scotland has a yearly week-long anti-poverty campaign week. There is agreement for a common EU action on October 17, with key messages, press release, also involving Brussels-level European Organisations. Topics could include attitudes towards poverty, Agenda 2030, social rights etc.

**PT, IC, LU, MK, DE, NL**

In IC, they are preparing the journalist award, to change media perceptions about people in poverty. In LU – national PEP meeting in July (1600 people). In MK – research on use of social benefits and state support (difficult as the Government say there is no poverty or social exclusion in the country). In DE – celebrating 25 years of Armutskonferenz (workshops in minimum income, journalist awards). In MT – focus on low wages and pensions. In NL – project with Ministry money to empower and give a voice to PEP, now in three municipalities, trying to expand. European action is too focused on the Commission, rather than the needs of PEP. We also need more interaction between PEP and MEPs.

**ES, BE, LV, SR**

LV and BE focus on minimum income. SR – employment and services. ESA – integrated strategy against poverty. Most have experience with direct action. LV – successful luncheon with journalists, meeting the Ministry etc. SR, ES – breakfast for journalists. Skype is very useful for bringing the voice of PEP to such events. Action on Panama Papers – wearing bathing suits and beach paraphernalia in official institutions. SR – one minute video about the situation of girls and women in Serbia (<https://www.facebook.com/seconsGRI/videos/786502741493632/>). We should look more into European Citizens’ Initiatives, maybe around EMIN 2.

**FR, BG, SK, EE, NO, IE, HU**

FR and SK have a common interest in food aid and will try to put together a joint proposal for an action in October. EE – campaign on families in poverty; they did a public event at the Opera, and also had a journalists’ award. NO – seminar with politicians and NGOs in August. IE – there were elections this year, so a lot of work around that, pushing for an integrated strategy against poverty, with adequate minimum income included – 230 types of reference budgets just for urban families. SK – focus on inequalities and policy assessment. HU – a lot of work criticising the workfare schemes and on the adequacy of minimum income. A lot of direct action in HU, forum theatre, work café, demonstrations, campaigns, targeting key politicians working on poverty, but no funds for this work. 17 October – action week in HU, ending with a demonstration, asking for adequate minimum income. Need to raise more awareness on PEP at the European level. IE – events and capacity building about activism. SK – website where people can see how people in poverty live in other countries.

**Jiri / FI** – As EAPN we have already been doing things, it is a question of reviving the spirit, and we could get organised for next year to do something big together.

**Sonja / NL** – For next year’s 17 October, or next year’s PEP, we could get a common action going. As it’s more difficult for the EXCO to decide, a proposal could be made at the GA.

**Amana & Bianca / EAPN Europe** – There is a section on the EAPN website called Voices from the Ground, which brings together precisely this kind of information on national action – please send this to us (videos, photographs, links, information), in whatever language. Also, for October 17, each country can do their own activities, but they could be branded under the same logo or slogan, to unify the action.

1. **Project Update and Exchange**

**Magda / EAPN Europe**

I am EAPN’s Development Officer, since May 2015. One of the projects we are currently implementing, together with ECORYS, is the FEAD project. The task is to support the Commission to put together a diverse stakeholder network for the implementation of FEAD – European Fund for the Most Deprived. At least three EU ISG members present have already organised consultations, which were supposed to bring together views on how national stakeholders see this network. 8 such consultations took place – there were supposed to be 9, but PT was left out at the last minute – but EAPN PT will be involved in the consultation process at the national level. The network was formally launched in Brussels at the beginning of June, and 10 EAPN networks attended, and the information was disseminated to all. There are three more meetings to be organised in Brussels before the end of the year. As it’s a tender contract, the work is somewhat defined, but it is not very rigid. It was supposed to be a task-oriented project, to simply hep the Commission set up this network, rather than being very political. However, we managed to take it beyond that and stress social inclusion as a key aspect in the implementation.

**Graciela / ES** – In our consultation, we wanted to understand the impact both at a regional, as well as national level. Main operators in Spain are the Food Bank and the Red Cross, working through parishes, small NGOs at the local level etc. There are some tensions, as CARITAS Spain at a national level are against the FEAD, but many local CARITAS parishes still do it on the ground. The three Ministries involved in the project don’t seem to cooperate a lot and exchange information, so the consultation was also an opportunity for them to find out what the other one is doing. We also prepared a report. So far, we had been working a lot on Structural Funds, but FEAD is a new thing. We will now prepare another meeting with the operators and the Ministries to take the work forward.

**Iris / RO** – We also had a consultation, and we had to do it in Bucharest, with no funds to bring stakeholders from the rest of the country, which was a problem as the needs and, subsequently, the implementation is very different from the capital to rural areas. Unfortunately, the Managing Authority did not attend. However, it was a useful experience. We are not sure yet about organising a follow-up meeting, but we will spread the conclusions of the FEAD launching conference, and we will keep in touch with those who already participated and are involved.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – This is a new direction for us, working on projects, but we also need to pick up the policy side of the work that is being done. FEBA, the European Federation of Food Banks, is a member of EAPN. We believe that food banks are proof of the failure of the European Social Model, as people should have enough resources not to need to rely on food banks. However, what we have now is a state of emergency. There is an opportunity right now with an Opinion of the EESC, where Krzysztof Balon (from EAPN Poland) is the rapporteur, so the project could also be used to come up with some concrete policy messages, so we can feed that in.

**Magda / EAPN Europe** – Regarding EMIN 2, there is not much to report for the time being. Patrizia Brandellero, former EAPN employee now working with us as a consultant, has done extensive work on it, and the application was submitted in March. We are now awaiting a repl from the European Commission.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – The ESF Transnational Learning Network, is call for tender set up by the Commission. AEIDL won the tender and EAPN was appointed to be the expert for the Social Inclusion Transnational Learning network (Fintan and Sian). It brings together Managing Authorities to look at how social inclusion can be delivered and promote mutual learning with aims of policy impact as well as better coordination on the calls for projects. There were two meetings of the Network already in December and March. It is rather depressing that MAs don’t seem to know what social inclusion is. There is high NGO involvement, but we still don’t have EAPN members involved as stakeholders, so please let us know if you are interested in doing this. There are only 8 Member States participating, and they have to come up with priorities for the TN. Currently these are 3 related to the funding priorities: implementing Active Inclusion; increasing access to integrated social services; participation of marginalised groups. It is still very broad, but may propose that each theme could be treated on a yearly basis.

**Jeanne / FR** – We have a member working on access to good quality food for people experiencing poverty, and we will try, with Slovakia, to exchange on this common topic and identify common ground. If other members are interested, maybe we can have a short discussion about this at the next EU ISG. Some French farmers are working closely with NGOs, so this is how fresh fruit and vegetables make their way into the food packages that are distributed to people experiencing poverty.

**Sian & Magda / EAPN Europe** – We were approached by Barilla, Italian company producing pasta, in order to work together on food issues, and we will have an exploratory meeting with them, and we will keep you updated on what comes out of it.

**ACTION POINT**

* ***Members should send information about actions at national level (videos, photographs, campaigns etc), in any language, to Rebecca Lee (***[***rebecca.lee@eapn.eu***](mailto:rebecca.lee@eapn.eu)***), to be put on the Voices from the Ground section on our website.***
* ***Any members who are interested in participating in the ESF Transnational Learning Network on Social Inclusion should contact Sian (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***) or Fintan (***[***fintan.farrell@eapn.eu***](mailto:fintan.farrell@eapn.eu)***)***

1. **EU Policy Update and EAPN Action on EU Social Pillar**

Setting the context: EU key drivers and challenges

See PowerPoint presentation prepared by the EAPN Europe staff.

**ACTION POINT**

* ***Members who receive personalised information about important Brussels events with no costs covered should send the information to EAPN Europe (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***).***

Strategy Document on the Social Pillar

* It would be useful to receive all materials from the conference, both the public as well as the internal part, link to presentations, but also full notes;
* How to take on board all 20 policy domains? One suggestion is to provide track changes directly on the Annex, adding what is missing;
* Members who are on holidays already in early July and won’t be able to comment on the draft Social Pillar paper can send free-form input beforehand, even if a few sentences on priorities;

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***EAPN Europe team will send out a draft response to the Social Pillar consultation, as well as a proactive paper outlining our position, in the week of 4 July.***
* ***Members are invited to send their comments on the draft by 31st August to*** [***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu) ***.***

1. **Evaluation of the meeting**

* It was a good meeting, the Steering Group did an excellent job;
* While the EU ISG has its very specific role, just like the EXCO, it is however important that, at the national level, the representatives of the two groups get together and discuss;
* It might be better to have the policy update PowerPoint at the very beginning of the two dates, as it sets the scene and provides an overarching frame;

1. **Next meeting**

The dates for the next meeting are not set in stone, so members are asked **not to book their travel** before explicit confirmation is received from EAPN Europe. The proposal is to have parallel EU ISG and EXCO meetings, followed by a General Assembly, on 27-29 October. It is also not yet clear if the meetings will take in Brussels or elsewhere.