**EU INCLUSION STRATEGIES GROUP**

***16-17 June 2017, Brussels***

*Minutes*

**Attending:** Martina Brandstätter (EAPN AT), David Sourdeau (EAPN BE), Douhomir Minev (EAPN BG), Suzana Gumbas (EAPN HR), Marina Koukou (EAPN CY), Stanislav Mrozek (EAPN CZ), Jürgen Schneider (EAPN DE), Mart-Peeter Erss (EAPN EE), Anna Järvinen (EAPN FI), Jeanne Dietrich (EAPN FR), Dina Vardaramatou (EAPN GR), Johanna László (EAPN HU), Magnea Sverrisdóttir (EAPN IC), Paul Ginnell (EAPN IE), Letizia Cesarini-Sforza (EAPN IT), Aidas Gedminas (EAPN LT), Robert Urbé (EAPN LU), Norberts Snarskis (EAPN LV), Maja Staleska (EAPN MK), Joseph Bartolo (EAPN MT), Sonja Leemkuil (EAPN NL), Dag Westerheim (EAPN NO), Paula Cruz (EAPN PT), Iris Alexe (EAPN RO), Marija Babović (EAPN SR), Graciela Malgesini (EAPN ES), Jimmie Trevett (EAPN SE), Slavomíra Mareková (EAPN SK), Katherine Duffy (EAPN UK), Stephan Burger (Eurodiaconia).

**EAPN Europe:** Sian Jones, Amana Ferro, Rebecca Lee, Matteo Mandelli

**Apologies:** Per K. Larsen (EAPN DK), Ryszard Szarfenberg (EAPN PL)

1. **Introduction**

**Graciela / EAPN ES,** chair for the first two sessions, welcomed participants and presented the agenda for the meeting.

The **Minutes** were approved, with few small remarks, and the **Agenda** agreed. The **Action Points** were mostly done. Everything in the **EU ISG Work Programme** has either been delivered, or is on track, and all links can be found in the updated document, which is available on the [Members’ Room](http://www.eapn.eu/login/).

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – The Briefing on the Migration Task Force is now ready; the Work Programme has been updated and uploaded online; a synthesis report about Europe 2020 Strategy has been prepared; the 2017 CSRs assessment has been published; on the European Pillar of Social Rights, EAPN Europe has sent a letter to European Council, advocacy work, a short initial response, a briefing and a social campaign; EXCO assumed full responsibility regarding work on the Future of Europe; EAPN Key Messages for the Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth 2017 have been mainstreamed; the paper on New Ways of Work is currently been drafted by Amana, drawing from inputs by members who have filled the fiches; finally, on the Task Force on Poverty and Human Rights, no member has sent concrete examples of national experience to contribute to the paper.

**Evaluation of the Annual Policy Conference (held the previous day)**

**Sonja / EAPN NL** – Is it possible to send an email explaining what is the use of the conference? There was no time for questions, it is frustrating if policymakers cannot listen to inputs from EAPN members. There should be more engagement of members during the meetings: even in the People Experiencing Poverty Meeting, there is very limited space for contributions.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** – The chair pointed out the scoping note on the conference was prepared and discussed in the last meeting. There was a significant difference between the morning and the afternoon session.

**Letizia / EAPN IT** – There is a bigger issue to reflect upon and to be discussed regarding how EAPN lobbies. Although the conference atmosphere was positive, since, in general, a collaborative spirit emerged from the discussions. There are two main interesting points that could be drawn from the conference: first, the possibility to establish benchmarks and standards within the European Pillar of Social Rights; second, the need to change the treaties in order to move forward (EAPN has two years to think about the way we want treaties to be changed).

**Marina / EAPN CY** – It was positive to involve people experiencing poverty among the panelists. We tend to underestimate their ability to participate as speakers, but this was proven wrong in the conference.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** – The morning workshop was useful to prepare members for the discussion that followed in the afternoon with external participants, but there was not time enough to digest what had to be presented. As a result, the key messages were too many and not well organized, we could have used our strength and eloquence better make messages more impactful for the policymakers present in the room.

**Johanna / EAPN HU** – The discussion in the morning was useful. It was surprising to see how nice and keen to discuss were the decision makers speaking in the plenary. It is something very unlikely to happen in Hungary. Is it possible to invite policymakers in the internal/workshop sessions as well?

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – The objective of the morning session was to build consensus among members first. Unfortunately, there are no financial resources to improve and enlarge the internal discussions.

**Marija / EAPN SR** – EAPN has limited financial opportunities. These kind of conferences are extremely important and effective. It is a moment to exchange and find mutual agreement, in order to lobby for change in front of institutional representatives. EAPN has to provide firm answers. What emerged from the workshops was an internal agreement, while the panel session proved that other nongovernmental organizations agreed with EAPN positions as well. Hence, it is very important to keep working with high level politicians and on the ground as well. It was generally a positive conference, but some questions were not answered by speakers as there were no chance to. Serbia is very discouraged to join the European Union, especially if it does not comprise a social dimension.

**Jeanne / EAPN FR** – It was positive to invite two representatives from the European Commission, who did identify them?

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – The Reference Group has prepared the whole conference. The Group decided to invite a cabinet member (Ruth Paserman), not Commissioner Marianne Thyssen herself, since she would have been too hard to reach. Sonia Vila Nunez is one of the experts who has worked directly on the European Pillar of Social Rights. Leo Williams, EAPN Director, has tried to book a representative from the United Nations, but he did not succeed in doing it, so the Reference Group opted for a member of SDG Watch (Leida Rijnhout). It is always difficult to respect the initial ambitions when preparing a conference. The Reference Group also aimed at reaching the Estonian presidency and the Maltese presidency. However, they got a refusal from both, with no explanations in the case of the Estonian government. The Maltese Government on the other hand could not attend because the conference coincided in timing with the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council in Luxembourg. Given the negative feedbacks from the two governments, the Reference Group opted for a representative of the Social Protection Committee, with which EAPN has generally a good working relationship.

**Jeanne / EAPN FR** – Member States should be more active. Maybe, in the preliminary morning session, each National Network could identify one key point and then these could be discussed with the panelists, by choosing ten key points from them and by making each National Network ask a question to the representative from the European Commission in order to get their response and to understand their position on each of these points.

**Joseph / EAPN MT** – Most of the work that has been done is diplomatic or on papers, there is no integration, nor penetration from a lower level and this was very evident from the conference. In Malta, EAPN has decided to start discussing directly with politicians and ministers and this way of working has been very successful (for example for the housing issue), as they are not only talking with institutions, but they get politicians in touch with people experiencing poverty. There needs to be a direct contact with people that can influence policy. It is very evident from the priorities of the Estonian presidency that poverty is not in the agenda and that the agenda is drawn from right-wing positions (For example they consider Malta to be a rich country, which is not the case). So, advocacy work with politicians must be done at the national level, otherwise there would be no improvement.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** – All national networks already work by contacting directly national politicians, but the conference is a different kind of lobbying, which shall not be underestimated.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** – The workshop was clear and effective. However, the access to adequate minimum income schemes should be higher up in the key priorities. It is necessary to investigate and promote an improvement of the status of civil dialogue in the possible change of treaties. There has not been time enough left to engage with speakers from the European Commission or from the Social Protection Committee. We have been too generous in giving space to panelist from other civil society organizations, therefore sacrificing a strategy aimed primarily at deliver EAPN`s key messages to policymakers.

**Sonja / EAPN NL** – The conference was positive, but people are broken and the trust in the European Union is at its lowest level. The time is now to do something for concrete changes: waiting and discuss is not enough.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** – Two remarks form a content point of view: first, most of Junker’s proposed scenarios for the future of Europe do not fit with current treaties, so there may be an underlining idea that they must be changed; second, on the Sustainable Development Goals, which are very much a new topic on EAPN agenda, it should be stressed that we have the opportunity to merge these goals together with existing processes at the European level, but at the same time we could try to lobby for more general idea, beyond the European level.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – The objectives of the conference were both internal and external ones: to build consensus among EAPN members and then to open a debate to other stakeholders and decision makers. The conference was just a starting point: the key messages should not be considered as a definitive position to present to the European Commission, but rather as an initial reflection. We will work now to develop a more detailed position. In reality, there was not always agreement among EAPN members in the workshops, but we will try to prepare a position to be discussed once again. Finally, it should be reminded that timelines for many of the frameworks discussed in the conference are unknown to anybody at the moment.

**Magnea / EAPN IC** – While poverty levels are lifting up, EAPN should aim at promoting equal levels: we should not downgrade some kinds of poverty, but it is necessary to focus on what is most useful. The issue of women in poverty for example should be tackled (single women with children are one of the most vulnerable categories). This is something that is lacking in the current work that we do, as it is a focus on children to prevent poverty.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** EAPN Europe will come out with initial clear messages from the conference, which will not be a final position. Meanwhile, we will also follow up with targeted advocacy work: keeping on gathering intelligence on policy frameworks like the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, since at the moment we are struggling to find clear timelines.

**ACTION POINTS:**

* ***If you haven’t created your personal profile for the Members’ Room on the EAPN website, please do so, and contact Rebecca Lee in the EAPN Europe staff team if anything is unclear (***[***rebecca.lee@eapn.eu***](mailto:rebecca.lee@eapn.eu)***).***
* ***EAPN Europe will prepare and distribute a document containing Key Messages from the conference and will also follow up by gathering intelligence for targeted advocacy work . It will then prepare with the reference group a draft EAPN position to be discussed with members in the autumn.***

1. **European Semester – delivering on the poverty target**

**Graciela / EAPN ES** – The European Semester is a process that takes one year. It is a cycle that begins in January with the Annual Growth Survey and it includes a lot of processes affecting most Member States of the European Union, particularly those in the Eurozone. The Semester is interesting because it is the ideological framework of the general macroeconomic process (hence also for non-EU countries).

**Sian / EAPN Europe** encouraged new members of the EU Inclusion Strategies Group to ask the Steering Group or to the staff team of EAPN Europe by e-mail if they want more information about the European Semester, as well as the possibility to meet after the 1st day as an informal session. She then introduced recent developments, as well as EAPN action (see PowerPoint presentation). Only thirteen National Networks sent their responses to the Country Reports, which is a little negative for the credibility and representativeness of EAPN. The staff knows that it is usually a question of short timing, but encourages everyone to make an effort to provide their input. 4 National Networks translated and used the template letter prepared by EAPN Europe to introduce themselves to their national Semester Officers.

**Exchange on national engagement**

**Jeanne / EAPN FR** – There has been a meeting on the Country Specific Recommendations organized by French Representation on the European Commission and EAPN France has provided their input to the meeting. They also had a meeting with the new ministry for Social Affair. Although it has to be recognized that there is never a poverty Recommendations for France: It would be useful to develop effective arguments to bring to politicians in order to convince them that Recommendations against poverty are needed even if the situation is not as bad in France as in other countries.

**Robert / EAPN LU** – There is a problem for richer countries in which the poverty rate is not as high as in other countries. Therefore, there should be a change on the indicator used to measure poverty. EAPN Luxembourg has tried to focus on specific issues (like housing or childcare) finding out that it is a more effective way to convince politicians.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – Members can find information on how to contact and establish a bilateral relationship with European Semester Officer in the EAPN Toolkit on Engaging with Europe 2020 and the European Semester, which is available on the website. Some National Networks have already used it in the past. IN addition, there are the country Desk Officers, the network of independent experts, funded by European Commission and working in Brussels. Please establish relations with all of these, it is much better if the contact is reached at the national level.

**Amana** **/ EAPN Europe** – In a meeting organized by the Social Protection Committee, the European Commission explained how Country Specific Recommendations are decided. For each Member State, there is a Country Desk in the European Commission. They do not look at poverty gaps between states, they just look at priorities within a certain country. So, poverty can end up in a lower position than other priorities, even if the country in question has a high rate of poverty. The Toolkit contains a section entitled Who to Contact, which is just one page, and explains who all interlocutors are and provides up to date details for all of them, for all countries. Several Directorate Generals (DGs) in the European Commission have their Country Desks. All Desk Officers for a certain country from different DGs get together forming a cross-dimensional Country Desk, in which priorities have to be discussed and compromises reached. Many times Desk Officers are specifically looking for inputs to support their work, they themselves encourage contributions from civil society. They also all speak your language.

***Countries who have contacted the Desk Officer:*** IE, BE, LV, FI

***Countries who have contacted the European Semester Officer:*** ES, IE, SK, PT, FR, LV, LT, BG, HU, SE, DE, HR, FI, LU

***Countries who have contacted the national Independent Expert*:** IE, ES, LU, LT

**Joseph / EAPN MT** – Malta’s Independent Expert has been involved in the government for a long time. He has designed Malta’s neoliberal economy.

**Paul/ EAPN IE** – Some Country Specific Recommendations are too wide, almost omni-comprehensive, especially those on social issues.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** – It is very positive that Country Specific Recommendations have been streamlined in three, instead of five, as before. They have now subdivision in the Recommendations themselves. Despite this, in the UK the issue of childcare is mixed up with education, which is negative and confusing.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – Sonia Vila Nunez said during the conference that 40% of the Country Specific Recommendations are concentrated on social issues. Although this is not necessarily positive, if we look at cases where a social Recommendation consist in proposing cuts in spending for the health care system.

**Martina / EAPN AT** – Does this 40% include labour market Recommendations as well? Do we have possibility to react and ask what this 40% of the Country Specific Recommendations concentrated on social issues is about?

**Graciela / EAPN ES** – The European Commission cannot sanction the Governments. The European Semester is still soft governance, recommendations. EAPN uses these recommendations as a tool to lobby at the national level. It is important tough to reflect upon the effectiveness of such lobbying activities.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – Members are invited to take a look at EAPN assessment of 2017 Country Specific Recommendations, where they can find answers to their questions. They contain more minimum income, inclusive labour market and activation. The overall picture is still dominated by macroeconomic issues, but there are signs that the social dimension is becoming more relevant. Straight after the conference Sonia Vila Nunez asked for a meeting with EAPN to talk about such details and also about future coordination.

**ACTION POINTS:**

* ***Members are encouraged to get in touch with key actors working on the European Semester processes for each Member State and send them their inputs as well as EAPN Europe, both at national level (European Semester Officers) and EU level – eg independent experts and Commission Desk Officers. See the Who to Contact section of the EAPN*** [***Toolkit on Stakeholder Engagement 2017***](http://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/EAPN-1-EAPN-Toolkit-Stakeholder-Involvement-2017-1054.docx)***, which is available on the website. You can also use and adapt the*** [***template letter***](http://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/EAPN-4b-EAPN-Template-Letter-for-ESOs-1036.docx) ***prepared by the EAPN Europe staff team to contact your European Semester Officer and feed into the process. If you have questions, contact the EAPN Europe staff team (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***)***

*Participants divided into 3 parallel working groups to discuss the National Reform Programmes – see separate complete notes for these.*

* 1. **What progress on the National Reform Programmes? Plenary feedback**

*Austria, Italy, Portugal, UK, Sweden, Iceland, Serbia, Estonia, Germany, Macedonia*

1. The NRPs is still a macroeconomic document and needs prominence to progress on social and wellbeing indicators.
2. We need real participation: guidelines; funding; an annexed document. This will increase the accountability & visibility of the Semester.
3. EAPN is ready to engage in the process. Networks have an important role as intermediaries for the sector and with people in poverty at national level, as well as closing the widening gaps between countries in terms of poverty, inequality & participation.

*Greece, Bulgaria, Latvia, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, Belgium, Malta, Ireland, Finland*

1. Participation (key words: transparency, civil society, impact, influence).
2. Adequate minimum income should be present in all recommendations.
3. Treaty change to make the social parts of the semester process binding so as to be effective and inclusive.

Additionally: More focus on poverty targets; taxation & distribution; Indicators and data-collection collection regarding monitoring.

*Luxembourg, Czechia, Cyprus, Spain, Romania, Netherlands, France, Lithuania*

* More social investment: adequate social protection, including minimum income, also services, programmes, activities, social accompaniment and social work.
* Reality check & civil dialogue: more and better NGO participation, evidence-based policies, accurate capturing of realities.
* Migration / Mobility / Rights of All – some countries are trying to integrate incoming migrants, others face massive brain drain – rights of all (citizens, residents, undocumented etc) need to be respected.
* Quality of Work and Employment – end precariousness and in-work poverty; employment is not a solution to every social problem for all!

Additionally: right to affordable housing; increase efficiency of European funds; gender equality; overindebtedness.

**Discussion**

* Poverty is also an economic issue, so it is logical to give it prominence.
* Incomes are not reported on. The reports need indicators on living standards.
* The Commission highlighted in the chapeau Communication that distributional impact should be systematically applied in the Semester at EU and national level, but will it be done?
* A binding process is good as long as they are good CSRs!
* A stick-approach is used towards minimum income (insertion/conditionality). It’s not rights-based.
* Sometimes benefits are a barrier as no guarantee and conditions imposed.
* A discussion was had about the Social OMC. Some felt that going back to use the social process would bring more impact. But recognized that the Social OMC and social reports are not very visible. However, some felt that they could offer the possibility of bringing more influence – as with the National Action Plans of the past. ie Austria, the social report in 2016 was 200pages and a good paper written by experts but the government didn’t use it…
* In general, whether it’s the Social Report or the NRP, Governments tend to present their best sides, so there’s a need to use other frames.
* Members underlined that it was important that members make the Semester Process and the Social OMC more visible to other organizations – and play a role as intermediary. In Portugal, they present this work to their members, in different ways, in workshops/meetings. Eg we hold a workshop on aging and at end explained how this issue was taken up in these documents.
* 1 group suggested a capacity building using the toolkit page-by-page. The Steering Group agreed to look into this.
* The group underlined the responsibility of all members to engage with the work on the Semester. It is important to have more than 11 responses to the questionnaires.

**ACTION POINTS:**

* ***Please fill in the NRP questionnaire – see follow-up email -e and return to the EAPN Europe staff team (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***) by the 3rd July.***
* ***The Steering Group will think about how to organise a direct capacity building session on the European Semester, using the Toolkit.***
  1. **Developing a National Poverty Watch report**

**Sian / EAPN Europe** presented the proposal, which aims to highlight the key trends and realities of poverty in different countries and EAPN solutions, set out by the scoping document recalling that it can be adapted to national realities, produced in own language and then translated (fully/partly) for use at European level. It is a trial to aim to be more effective and communicate better at national level, using this as a basis. It is a minimal template (key trends, examples & what you want) which networks can add their own flavour to. The timing for the EU agenda is by November, hence the October deadline. It was also recalled that these are in our Work Programme.

**Discussion**

* It could be interesting to have EU and national data. The audience may determine this too.
* The report could be useful as a propaganda tool at other meetings with others, for them to come to grips with what poverty is.
* Need to show the voices of PEP: What’s behind the statistics.
* A myth-busting element could be interesting e.g. 10 facts about migrants: It would thus act as a counter to current feelings of insecurity.
* It could take the best of what already exists in various report, e.g. in Germany.
* If the housing problem is key in 3 countries, these countries’ reports could compare and overlap and learn from each other.
* Contents points 4-7 are more important than point 3 (which is already done).
* Can try to be different. E.g. in Iceland, children drew pictures of poverty.
* Drawbacks are the question if anyone at all will read it at EU level and that resourcing at the time of contracts being signed wasn’t taken into account.
* 10 pages is too long. It could be 2 pages: Who we are; what we want.
* It would be great to have common text for points 1-3, e.g. what is poverty – more efficient. The Brussels team will look into providing this.
* The data needs to be interesting for the national level, & important to know how to work with data yourselves. We can capacity build this.
* Data must be presented in an EU comparative context, or 19% doesn’t mean very much. Graphs are easy to use. EU SILC is the only comparable data.
* Living standards are very out of date. The income line for example in the UK, isn’t useful as wages have all gone down. Minimum Income standards (reference budgets) can be comparable.
* Different aspects in different countries can be highlighted e.g. in-work poverty or child poverty.
* We always say that data lies. It’s the stories behind the data that should be captured.We can start with data and then argue from that – interpretation; gaps.
* It’s interesting to highlight lesser known data – from local or home sources eg An example of an indicator could be the cost of school lunches as a percentage of whole income; or how many kids go to school without breakfast or skip school to step around this problem. Another example: the cost of going to trainings to be able to find a job.
* Data on consumption against the minimum wage could be an idea.
* The issue of who will do the work was raised.
* The issue of how to represent all the network’s groups was raised.
* The issue of covering translation within the contract payments was raised. It was clarified that there is an extra 1000 EUR for translation. What is available for Europe 2020 work is up to 1500 EUR with 15% co-funding. If a network won’t spend the translation budget, it can be transferred to Europe 2020 work.
* The issue of EU ISG members not being involved in the contract discussions was raised, nor receiving the payment. It was proposed that contractual information is also communicated to EU ISG members.
* A partial translation is an option.
* There is a strength in all reports being in English for our learning and communication on the website etc. so need to see how this works.
* A template of 1 page already in English would be great.

**ACTION POINTS:**

* ***The EAPN Europe staff will resend the Scoping Note, as well as the poverty definition - text and data, to copy/paste.***
* ***Members to send the translated national document to the EAPN Europe staff team (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***) by 2 October, in time for the 19-21 October meeting.***
* ***Members to send their individual finished product to European Commission Desk Officers, European Semester Officers, independent expert for their country as well as the. SPC, EMCO etc (see Toolkit).***
* ***EAPN will develop a short synthesis document with links to the national documents and send to the EU institutions and Brussels stakeholders.***
  1. **New ways of work**

**Amana / EAPN Europe** introduced the first draft synthesis and which inputs were included. The UK’s was not, as no time to integrate it properly, nor Sweden’s, as it was sent to a colleague who was on holiday. A query was raised as to whether an input from Czechia was received. Members were reminded that the idea of the position is not to cover every angle of the topic, but just what new ways of work means for poverty.

The scope/definition was recalled: the paper should include:

* atypical work contracts, increased precariousness and forms of unsustainable work
* flexibilization / deregulisation of labour
* robotization;
* globalization.

The input received was largely on robotization and partly on globalization. We should now consider other precarious contractual forms, other new forms, and which particular groups are most hit. We should also consider the role of paid work in redistributing wealth in light of these new forms – what about basic income etc.

**Discussion**

**Jeanne / EAPN France -** There is a new idea in France that people can quit with no job to go to and be paid benefits. When s/he is offered 2 jobs, s/he must agree to accept up to 25% less salary than received before. It is part of a ‘basket of rights’ related to work e.g. yearly hours of training in your account; care obligations taken into account etc.

**Katherine / EAPN UK –** In theUK [and Cyprus] one receives 6 months benefits (if paid enough national insurance in the UK, and you must accept the 1st job, and there are terribly strict procedures/sanctions).

**Robert / EAPN Luxembourg –** In Luxembourg, youget benefits after 3 months of quitting a job but you must accept the 2nd job offer or it is stopped.

**Joe / EAPN Malta –**  In Malta, employers are based outside Malta – mostly in Eastern Europe - so they apply different conditions; employees are paid less than minimum wage as ‘appear’ self-employed, and they have no sick leave, nor right to unionization.

**Feedback from buzz groups**

*UK, Iceland*

In both the UK & Iceland there is low unemployment and a demand for low-skilled work (care, agriculture, health, fisheries) – often Portuguese with no rights. The UK can bring in EU *skilled* workers too – with no need for a language test. There is a bogus category of youth self-employed, and clear figures of graduate under-employment. Teachers are unemployed as there is a shortage of resources. We must redistribute wealth – even if full employment is not the best way.

*Finland, Sweden, Hungary, Croatia*

Youth are the most affected: they receive part-time, often low-paid work first, almost as a rule. Even full-time work is not paid enough. In Finland, there is a new black market largely filled by undocumented migrants with no rights. In Croatia, there is demand for workers yet high unemployment because of the tourist season. All countries have a gender pay gap. Robotisation is positive but there is the question of re-distribution of adequate taxes and benefits from the work. In Finland, negative assistance of asylum-seekers is a new problem.

*Netherlands, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Malta*

People need jobs to have a social life. In Lithuania, there is modern slavery – people go to Spain or the UK to work very low wages and can’t go back to their country. Quality employment must be provided: 8% unemployed but 22% are under the poverty line. Globalisation means work being for the same amount of hours but companies leave to China etc. In the Netherlands, multinationals give jobs of a few hours for minimum wages and fire people after a couple of months to not have to employ them on a long-term contract.

*Greece, Cyprus, Macedonia, Austria*

The unemployed, job-seekers, or those who are going to be out of work suffer abusive practices. Migrants, women, youth, skilled, low-skilled and graduates are the main groups affected. The number of different forms of work is itself an indication that we are not in a pro-workers’ situation. In Austria, you can sign a fixed contract and it doesn’t matter how many hours you work in reality. In Cyprus, all groups are affected. In Greece, institutionalized workers are paid 400 EUR which is more than many but you cannot live on it. In Macedonia there is a positive example of a street-magazine project with fixed salary which works very well. New ways don’t safeguard rights: the example of a legal decision in France to sack someone who didn’t reply to an email sent after working hours and the employee won the case.

*Latvia, France, Portugal, Slovakia*

The main group affected are youth: e.g. in Slovakia there is agency, leased, apprenticeship work and activation activities. In Portugal, there main groups are those up to 30 years old and the elderly but for the latter, it is supposed that employers are not interested. Continuity for youngsters is lacking. In Latvia, workers left and employers are looking for different skills for working machinery e.g. drivers by automatic machines. The IT sector counts self-employed, and IT gambling is global but functioning from somewhere. An alternative economy on bartering / exchange of products emerges.

*Czechia, Estonia*

New ways of work is seen as positive: new services and new jobs. If society becomes fully robotized, then perhaps production will return to Europe e.g. maintenance jobs. Production is cheaper and people will have more money for services, and society will have more for welfare. Rural areas not far from cities could become a new focal point.

*Spain, Romania, Serbia, Ireland, Belgium*

Negative are: virtual jobs; posting of workers; no check on social security payments. Positive are: IT engineers working virtually for offshore countries and seasonal work. EAPN Spain contacted trade unions but not one has made any reflection yet. There is a lot of self-employment work from home, internships without pay, domestic workers who pay a lot in but who have no rights, 25% of GDP is from informal work. In Ireland, there is no discussion on the topic - a political party went only to the media -; self-employed have reduced protection rights; Zero/low-hours contracts; there is probably a legal proposition coming. In Belgium, there is less protection; daily contracts; Minimum Income beneficiaries are urged to do social work thus competing with other workers; jobs are moved Eastern European countries. New jobs that will be created will not be for the unemployed/low-skilled. This relatively new fragmentation of workers isn’t to be found in the current structure of employers / employees.

**ACTION POINTS:**

* ***Any additional input by members is crucial (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***). A second draft will be prepared and discussed at the October meeting.***

**5.European Pillar of Social Rights, Reflection Paper on Social Dimension**

**Sian / EAPN Europe** presented a PowerPoint with the most recent updates and developments, as well as EAPN action, regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights. See full presentation in the background documents for the meeting.

**Questions/Discussion on Initial reactions to the Documents**

* Clarification was asked about the Written Statement Directive? It is about workers being clearly informed about their employment rights and conditions.
* It is very hard to still engage people in this, because a lot of work has been done already, and people are exhausted. While we can work on this as EU ISG or EXCO, but it will be very difficult to engage members on the ground further.
* The best solution is to try to work with the European Parliament on their resolutions and reports. Regarding work-life balance, the feeling is that the package is too ambitious to actually be adopted.
* An important question is where to we stand on the Pillar being restricted to the Eurozone, so it is crucial to understand how do we position ourselves as EAPN on this.
* Every single Member State in the EU, with the exception of Denmark and UK, who have separate agreements, are on course to join the Eurozone sooner or later.
* By allowing some Member States to be outside the ‘group of the willing’, these may build strong opposition and actually undermine the process.
* It is difficult to choose priorities, because we don’t know what we’re choosing function of – what is important? What is EAPN’s added value? What we already have work done on? What is most relevant for the Brussels team? Or for our National Networks? Avoiding overlaps with the work of our EOs or other organisations?

**Buzz groups – priority areas for members**

* Minimum income, access to essential services, social protection, equal opportunities, secure and adaptable employment (RO, NO, IC)
* Wages, housing and assistance for homeless, social protection, minimum income, access to essential services (LV, SK, CZ, EE)
* Gender equality, healthcare, education and training, access to essential services, wages (NL, CY, IT, ES, PT, GR)
* Minimum income, social protection, long-term care, access to essential services, housing and assistance for homeless (UK, IE, BE)
* Education, training and lifelong learning, equal opportunities, social protection, healthcare, minimum income (MK, AT, LT)
* Social protection, wages, minimum income, education, training and lifelong learning, equal opportunities (FR, HR, FI, DE, SE)

Results

**Social protection – *5 votes***

**Minimum income – *5 votes***

**Access to essential services – *4 votes***

**Education, equal opportunities, wages – *3 votes***

***Networks willing to work on the Scoreboard:*** UK, SR, LV, ES, IE + Guy Janvier for EAPN France

**ACTION POINTS**

* **The EAPN Europe staff will draft a response to the Social Pillar package, which will be circulated to members, who are invited to submit comments before it is finalised (**[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)**)**
* **The EAPN Europe staff will develop an action plan proposing follow up on other elements: interinstitutional proclamation and work with the European Parliament, engaging with the Gothenburg summit, the new social Scoreboard, and will keep members involved and informed (**[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)**)**
* **The EAPN Europe staff will draft a response to the public consultation on access to social protection for all forms of employment, to be circulated to members for comments over the summer, before being submitted in the Autumn (**[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)**)**

**6. Task Forces**

**Task Force on Poverty and Human Rights**

**Amana / EAPN Europe** informed members that the work of this Task Force was proceeding as planned. A third meeting (and the first of this year) took place on May 15th. Regarding the Handbook, the complete draft is being finalised this month and will be sent to you before the summer for comments and examples. Work has progressed also on the legal action and the possibility for EAPN to lodge a collective complaint with the Council of Europe. Matteo Mandelli (EAPN Policy Assistant) supported the work by providing in-depth research on the matter, and we also benefitted from input and a presentation from FEANTSA (Maria José Aldanas) about their experience with such legal cases. The fourth (and last) meeting of the Task Force will take place on September 21st, where the Handbook will be finalised (taking on board your comments) and a capacity building session, with the presence of some Task Force members, will take place at the next EU ISG meeting, in October in Dublin.

**Task Force on Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

**Sian / EAPN Europe** explained that, following the rich discussion during the last EU ISG meeting, the task force tried to take most things on board, but also decided, in agreement to the Terms of Reference, to leave out some things ie they underlined the agreement that the briefing should refer to all migrants, not just refugees/asylum seekers. The briefing has been revised accordingly, and now a position paper is being written being drafted by Robin Hanan from Ireland. The first draft has just been produced, but as people are on holiday, they are waiting until July to get the responses. There will also be an advocacy action plan, to see what we can concretely do together. You will be given the opportunity to comment on these documents. There are a lot of different views, sometimes conflicting ones, so it is not always easy to take everything on board. The next Task Force meeting will be on 11th September.

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***Please review the draft Handbook of the Task Force on Poverty and Human Rights, which will be sent to you over the summer, and provide concrete examples from the work of your Network – see follow-up email – to EAPN Europe staff (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***).***
* ***Please review and provide input on the draft position paper and action plan for the Task Force on Migration, Asylum-Seekers and Refugees, which will be sent to you – see follow-up email – to EAPN Europe staff (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***).***

**7. Food security**

**Jeanne / EAPN FR** – We have a researcher specialised on food issues in our network, and we organised an event two years ago, starting from the idea that we have poor people who can’t always access healthy food, while we also have farmers who become poorer and poorer. We started thinking about how to combine these two aspects of poverty. We have prepared a position paper, which has been distributed to EU ISG members. We would like to know colleagues’ opinions on this paper, including through discussions with your EXCO member. The right to food is recognised by international law, but it is currently not enforced. Food insecurity is difficult to quantify, but it is estimated that, in France, 12% of the population suffer from it. The Europe 2020 Strategy aims to fight against poverty, and access to quality food is a significant part of it, and access to food is also strongly supported by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). Food aid reached 4.8 million people in 2014, significantly up from 2.8 million in 2008. Obesity, high blood pressure and many other health risks are among the implications. Some people refuse food aid, because the quality is very poor, there is no choice, and they feel stigmatised. On the agricultural production side, we feel free trade treaties should be revisited, but there are also solutions at regional and local level – there are initiatives, but they have little support from the French state, including financial support. We are proposing: to establish a network of stakeholders; to map existing initiatives which provide alternatives to producing, distributing, and consuming food; identify actors amenable to new methods, and organise good practice exchanges. We would also like t work with DG EMPL, the Poverty Intergroup in the European Parliament, and the European Economic and Social Committee (the latter has produced a report on the topic few weeks ago), by sending them this position paper. In France, there is a big event upcoming on this, to build consensus about access to quality and sustainable food. We would like to have your feedback and suggestions on this initiative and position paper.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – The position paper prepared by EAPN France links heavily to the FEAD, which is now part of the remit of the EXCO work, in the framework of the follow-up they are doing on EU funding, and there is a specific subgroup in the EXCO working on this. We need to keep these linkages in mind, EUISG members are advised to speak to your EXCO member and liaise with them. The Brussels Team will liaise with the Development Officer over the follow up.

**Discussion**

**Graciela / EAPN ES** – We also recognise the two dimensions of access to food, both from the perspective of farmers and producers, as well as consumers, particularly people in poverty. The situation is worse for single households with children, who can’t afford protein twice a week. Red Cross, which is part of EAPN Spain, has been working to introduce baby food, as well as vegetarian options and options for lactose intolerant people in the food basket being provided through FEAD. We have small initiatives at the local level to ‘recycle food’, bringing surpluses to distribution centres. However, FEAD does not allow the inclusion of this in their own distributed baskets.

**Letizia / EAPN IT** – This Monday, there is a meeting of the FEAD European Network in Brussels (EAPN is a partner, Magda Tancău in the staff team is coordinating our participation). The next meeting will be in Italy in November. The quality of the food distributed through FEAD is often questionable. An alternative model is to give people a card, on which they can go shop themselves in a special supermarket – this gives people choice, rather than a fixed package. Italy has small farmers rather than big agricultural undertakings, so the situation is very different. There is a lot of work to do, but also a lot of work being done already.

**Dag / EAPN NO** – Traditional farming is nearly dead, and will disappear in 30 years, while 80% of the population will live in towns by then. Crops are already being moved in sky-rise containers, with different things planted on different floors, on the vertical. This makes it easier for people to access this in the area where they live.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** – We have both huge farms, as well as small, individual farmers. The UK is not a part of FEAD, because the NGOs do not agree that food should be distributed for free, but that people who can should donate the money to pay for the food for those who can’t. Wages, including top-up benefits, are often not enough for people to eat and feed their families. This is not just a question of low income, but rather extra high cost, particularly for housing – after paying rent, not enough is left to eat. Teachers are bringing extra lunches for children who can’t afford to bring their own. Migrants and refugees are often put in accommodation without access to a cooker, so the only option is to give them pre-prepared food. The scope of a paper and our discussion should go beyond just what FEAD is doing.

**Paul / EAPN IE** – We have soup kitchens, and their number has gone up significantly. There is also a community organisation working on access to quality food, they are a member of EAPN IE. They supported community gardens and education, which was very inclusive, but they lost funding and had to close. We did some work on this with Vincent Caron, former Senior Policy Officer for EAPN, when the FEAD was adopted.

**Aidas / EAPN LT** – FEAD provides food, but also hygiene products, but they are also talking about adding services to the package. It works through municipalities, and it is up to local authorities if they want to cooperate with NGOs (like food banks, Red Cross or others). There are also regulations, for example if you organise a big event, you have to source food from approved suppliers, you can’t go directly to farmers, because their produce is not always EU-certified to quality standards.

**Martina / EAPN AT** – There is an international organisation called FIAN, working on access to food and food security from a global and human rights perspective. FIAN Austria is part of EAPN Austria. See more details her: <http://www.fian.org/who-we-are/worldwide/>.

**Dina / EAPN GR** – In our country, there are children who faint in school because they haven’t eaten enough. Roma children, although they are Greek citizens, are sometimes considered another group, as well as asylum-seekers and refugees, are particularly exposed. It is not clear to me if FEAD applies only to citizens, residents, or even undocumented people.

**Amana / EAPN Europe** – While I don’t work directly on FEAD, I attended an event a few months ago, where different Member States were presenting good practices. Somebody from the Latvian Ministry explained how they use FEAD: they only cover 35-40% of the identified food needs of the individual, so that we preserve incentives to work – people wouldn’t take up jobs if we covered 100% of the need.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** – There is a European Network on Rural Development, who have done a lot of work on putting consumers and producers together, and we should maybe connect to this. We also need to discuss the Common Agricultural Policy and the subsidies that go to farmers (which represent 60% of the EU budget). Finally, we need to take into account sustainability – we are talking about nutritious food, but we should also look at it in the framework of sustainable, ecological production.

**Iris / EAPN RO** – As absorption of Structural Funds is very low, FEAD plays a key role in Romania. These packages of food and hygiene products are very helpful. There is a possibility to work in partnership with NGOs, like in Lithuania, but the framework is so rigid that this doesn’t work in practice – so implementation is a big issue. The Parliament passed a law on food waste this year, as the rate for Romania is very high, while we are the poorest country in the EU. The problem with this law is, again, that it is blocked in its implementation by multinationals who own supermarkets, as they want to sell everything rather than ‘recycle’.

**Anna / EAPN FI** – It is shameful that, in this day and age, we still need food banks, and people have to queue in order to access charity food. Of course it is a much needed emergency measure, but such emergency measures shouldn’t exist in a welfare state.

**Mart-Peeter / EAPN EE** – Food is very expensive in the EU, and measures seem to go in the opposite direction, there are no efforts to make food cheaper.

**Slavomira / EAPN SK** – We sent a questionnaire about this through our members, and NGOs such as Red Cross and CARITAS have no interest in this topic. It was, however, interesting for trade unions and women’s organisations.

**Sonja / EAPN NL** – We are against food banks, people the State must guarantee that people have sufficient income to be able to buy food themselves. We see a lot of citizens’ initiatives to help each other. Empty spaces between houses have been turned into vegetable gardens, also more fruit trees in the municipalities. Another initiative is this big freezer in a public place, where people who have enough can leave things and people on low incomes can take what they want.

**Johanna / EAPN HU** – The implementation of the programme was delayed very much. The eastern part of Hungary, which is very poor, did not receive any FEAD support at all. A lot of it has to do with the public procurement system. We also have this idea of fruit trees in public spaces, so people can pick them up on their own.

**Jeanne / EAPN FR** – Thank you very much to everybody for all your input and the perspectives of your country!

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***Jeanne will feedback the input to EAPN FRANCE. They will liaise with the FEAD group in the EXCO on follow up and next steps. These will be reported to the next meeting.***
* ***Any members aware/working with other organizations at national or EU/International level working on these issues should feed the information back to Jeanne/EAPN France.******'jdietrich@uniopss.asso.fr'***

**8. Wrap-Up**

**Any Other Business**

**Sonja / EAPN NL** – Greetings to everybody from Maschinka Groot, who received her BA in Social Work just yesterday.

**Dina / EAPN GR** – A right-wing MP was taken to court by a female employee he sacked without written notice and without compensation. He lost the trial and he has now to pay the fine, the compensation and an overdue amount, which counts from the day he sacked her till today. He accused her of lying, but the court did not buy it. It's great news because we are talking about an MP who is facing the consequences of being an unjust and bad boss.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** – We would like to set up a group on women and poverty in EAPN, as inequality and poverty, including the labour market, affects women differently. We also want to stress the invisibility of women in Europe 2020 and in the political agenda, particularly in relation to access to resources. EAPN Italy and EAPN Spain have already done work on this. EIGE, the European Institute for Gender Equality, is providing standardised information for every European country, so we now have comparable data in housing, employment, pensions etc. In December 2015, the European Commission adopted the strategic commitment for gender equality, which lasts till 2019, and it has at least two objectives directly related to poverty. The idea is to kick-start a discussion group and adopt an EAPN position on this issue.

**Johanna / EAPN HU** – I have been keeping you updated about the very harsh times for civil society in Hungary under the current regime. These past days, the law passed that foreign-funded NGOs represent foreign-interests so need to register on a list, to be closely monitored. EAPN HU should be on the list, but we are currently having an internal discussion about how to best approach this, whether we will sign or not, or try civil disobedience etc. The Hungarian Government is under strong Putin influence right now. We will work on a solidarity paper, and if you feel that you can, we would appreciate your support on this.

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***Members interested in joining the Women and Poverty email cluster are invited to send an email to Magnea Sverrisdóttir (***[***magnea.sverrisdottir@kirkjan.is***](mailto:magnea.sverrisdottir@kirkjan.is)***).***
* ***Members interested in supporting the solidarity paper put forward by EAPN Hungary should get in touch with Johanna László (***[***laszlo.johanna@hapn.hu***](mailto:laszlo.johanna@hapn.hu)***).***

**Evaluation**

The Evaluation form is now online, please feel it in. Members were also encouraged to give feedback through post-its and put them on a flipchart sheet.

**Next meeting**

19-21 October, in Dublin, combining EXCO, EU ISG, capacity-building, and General Assembly. Every Network can bring three people. There will be half a day of study visits as part of mutual learning exchange, then a day and a half of EU ISG, and then the GA on Saturday morning. The focus on the learning exchange will be on housing and homelessness. Please don’t book any flights before you receive the Registration Form from the EAPN Europe staff team.