



Association „EAPN-Latvia”

www.eapn.lv

NATIONAL REPORT 2016

Influencing National Governments for Better Policies: Advocacy, Lobbying and Policy-Making Linked to European Level Developments

1) Cooperation with government authorities and municipalities in Latvia:

In 2016 EAPN-Latvia continued to cooperate with the Ministry of Welfare of Latvia (the Association had its representatives at the Committee of Social Inclusion Policy Coordination, Committee of Gender Equality, and the Operational Programme of FEAD), with the Ministry of Interior of Latvia, with the Riga City Council. Since 2015 EAPN-Latvia has been a member of the Cooperation Memorandum of Latvian NGOs and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia.

2) Measures taken to implement EU policies in Latvia:

On 8th June in Riga the representatives of the member organizations of EAPN-Latvia participated in the conference “Cooperation of Government and nongovernmental organizations – a necessity or an extra?”, which was organized by a council comprising of cooperating members of Latvian nongovernmental organizations and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia.

On 10th June in Riga the representatives of the member organizations of EAPN-Latvia and partners participated in the forum “10 years since the parliament declaration regarding civil society development and cooperation with nongovernmental organizations in Latvia”, organized by Latvian Parliament (Saeima) and nongovernmental organizations.

On 27th August in Riga EAPN-Latvia in collaboration with Women's Rights Institute, IWO – International Women's Organization, Latvian Red Cross, Large Family Center "Family Support" and Social support society "Success" participated in NGO presentation, which took place in Vērmanes garden as part of the project “Information Centre for Immigrants” led by Shelter “Safe House”.

On 9th September in Riga EAPN-Latvia Representatives Laila Balga (the Board member) and Norberts Snarskis (PINS) took part in NGO Dialogue platform meeting, which was held as part of the project “Information Centre for Immigrants” organized by Shelter “Safe House”.

On 19th September in Riga EAPN-Latvia experts Laila Balga (the Board member), Norberts Snarskis (PINS), Aivars Lasmanis (Health Institute), Jānis Felsbergs (LPF) and Bruno Barons (RASA) participated in the discussion “The pillar of European social rights: debates with Latvian organized civil society”, the initiative of The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

On 10th November EAPN-Latvia submitted to EAPN and EAPN-Spain information about the current situation in Latvia, as well as the proposals on European Social Fund's use of funds to eliminate poverty.

On 24-25th November in Riga took place an international conference “Strengthening the social protection in the Baltic states – the perspective of Diaconia”, organized by EAPN (Europe) partner organization Eurodiaconia (represented in Latvia by Ramona Petrika) and Diaconia in Latvia. It was attended by Laila Balga (the Board member),

Norberts Snarskis (PINS), and Juris Dzelme (AIKNC), Vija Ahunzjanova (Large Family Center "Family Support", Valija Eize (Latvian Future Institute) and others.

On 7th December in Riga Laila Balga participated in the Latvian Parliament European Affairs` Commission meeting, whose topic was "Latvian national position in European Union employment, social policy, health and consumers` rights` protection Council of Ministers".

3) Participation in monitoring the use of the funding of the European Union:

Since 2014 Laila Balga has been working as a member of the Monitoring Committee of the Planning period 2014-2020 of the European Structural and Investment Funds and the Cohesion Fund, the Subcommittee of Employment, Workforce Mobility and Social Inclusion.

4) Advocacy and lobbying:

1) On 24th and 25th February in Brussels, Belgium, the EAPN-Latvia representative Norberts Snarskis participated in European Commission Economics and Finance General Directorate meeting about the new European Strategies and operating framework. On 25th February Norberts Snarskis discussed with the Vice president of European Commission Valdis Dombrovskis` office specialists about the EAPN-Latvia requirements included in 12.11.2015 Resolution.

On 8th March in Riga took place the EAPN-Latvia organized discussions "Conversation with women about women in Europe in the era of change: law protection, a place in society, personal freedom". During those discussions participants from 16 nongovernmental organizations and municipalities approved of and submitted a resolution to Latvian and European institutions.

On 11th April EAPN-Latvia in cooperation with „Civic Alliance - Latvia" and Latvian Green Movement sent an application "For direct and instant support of Latvian civil society, implementing a partnership between the State and society in the framework of structural funds" to the Prime Minister of Latvia.

On 1st May in Riga the member organizations of EAPN-Latvia participated in the campaign - people's meeting "For worthy work, health and education in Latvia" by Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia.

On 15th June the member organization of EAPN-Latvia – "Women's Rights Institute" submitted proposals to The Ministry of Welfare on securing equal opportunities and rights for men and women – the 2016-2020 Project.

On 15th August EAPN-Latvia experts Laila Balga (the Board member), Juris Dzelme (AIKNC), Leons Mežeckis (Victory Foundation) and Māra Anteniške (IWO) submitted proposals to the Latvian Association of Social Entrepreneurship regarding the development of the Social Entrepreneurship Law.

On 17th September in Riga EAPN-Latvia representatives took part in Latvian seniors` meeting organized by Latvian Pensioners` Federation.

On 21st September EAPN-Latvia made proposals for the pillar of European Social rights, those were submitted to The European Economic and Social Committee, Latvian Parliament Social and Work relations committee, State Chancellery and to the Ministry of Welfare.

On 2nd November Laila Balga took part in the meeting organized by the nongovernmental organizations and Latvian Ministry of Finance, the topic of which was legislation regarding nongovernmental organizations` economic activity.

On 22nd November EAPN-Latvia submitted proposals to the Ministry of Finance about the unlawful decisions made by State Revenue Service regarding the nongovernmental organizations` economic activity.

Participation in the People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion programme as part of the Internal and External Workings of EAPN-Latvia

On 2nd March Gundega Berge was confirmed as a national coordinator of EAPN PeP programme in year 2016.

On 7th-8th April in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, EAPN-Latvia representative Gundega Berge and expert Aivars Lasmanis participated in PeP (People experiencing Poverty) national coordinators' meeting.

From 1st May different activities are taking place in Latvia within the framework of the EAPN PeP programme "Increasing opportunities by participating" on the topic of "Healthy People - Wealthy People". Those events are run by EAPN-Latvia in cooperation with the Health Institute. During the period from 1st June to 20th August in the regions of Latvia was conducted a survey of people who have experienced poverty and of specialists, and the compilation of its results.

On 22nd-23rd August in Jēkabpils district Mārtiņa Foundation psychological rehabilitation center "Dūjas" was held a discussion on public health issues, in which participated 20 representatives from EAPN-Latvia, Health Institute, Mārtiņa Foundation, Latvian Pensioners' Federation, Large Family Center "Family Support", Latvian Association of Large Families, Jēkabpils Association of Pensioners "Bonding", Jēkabpils branches of Daugavas Vanagi, Dialogs Plus, Jēkabpils NGO Resource Center, Holista, Dobeles association of people with disabilities, as well as Daugavpils and Bauska district residents. The discussion was led and participants' proposals were summarized by Health Institute specialists Krista Krūmiņa and Zane Reinfelde.

On 23rd August within the framework of the PeP programme the composition of the EAPN-Latvia delegation was approved for the discussion with policy makers in LR Saeima Social and Labour Affairs Committee and in Public Health Subcommittee. Delegation includes Elīna Ālere-Fogele from the Network Board, Krista Krūmiņa, Zane Reinfelde and Rolands Kalniņš from the Health Institute, Agita Pleiko from Jēkabpils NGO Resource Center, Imants Keišs from Latvian Association of Large Families, Vija Ahunzjanova from Large Family Center "Family Support", Ligita Upīte from Salas district association "Holista", Jānis Stjadja from Dobeles association of people with disabilities and an unemployed person Aleksejs Buhtojarovs from Daugavpils.

On 2nd November EAPN-Latvia Chairperson of the Board Laila Balga spoke at the meeting of LR Saeima Social and Labour Affairs Committee regarding the application by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia Juris Jansons about poverty issue in Latvia.

On 3rd November The Board of EAPN-Latvia authorized the President of the Latvian Traders Association Henriks Danusēvičs to fulfill the duties of PeP national coordinator at the EAPN PeP conference in Brussels on 14th – 16th November 2016.

On 3rd November the board of EAPN-Latvia made changes in the composition of the delegation for PeP 15th European Conference "Empowerment through Participation" which took place on 14th-15th November in Brussels, Belgium. The conference was to be attended by national coordinator Henriks Danusēvičs, member of the Board of Dobeles association of people with disabilities Jānis Stjadja, Jēkabpils NGO Resource Center PR specialist Aleksandrs Kalniņš and Latvian Association of Large Families Chairman of the Board Imants Keišs.

On 4th November in Riga took place the meeting of people who have experienced poverty and specialists. The purpose of this meeting was to prepare for the discussion in the committees of LR Saeima. The meeting was attended by PeP national coordinator Gundega Lasmane, Imants Keišs, Vija Ahunzjanova and Jānis Stjadja.

On 8th November representatives of EAPN-Latvia Gundega Lasmane, Aivars Lasmanis, Imants Keišs and Jānis Stjadja represented PeP interests in LR Saeima Social and Labour Affairs Committee, headed by Deputy Aija Barča.

During EAPN PeP 15th European Conference "Empowerment through Participation" which took place on 14th-15th November 2016 in Brussels, Belgium, Latvia was represented by Henriks Danusēvičs (EAPN-Latvia national coordinator), Imants Keišs (Latvian Association of Large Families), Jānis Stjadja (Dobeles association of people with disabilities) and Aleksandrs Kalniņš (Jēkabpils NGO Resource Center). The EAPN-Latvia delegation met with Guna Zaķe-Balta – the office specialist of Roberts Zīle (Member of the European Parliament).

Development and Growth of the Network

EAPN-Latvia was founded on November 2013 by seven founding member organizations. At the end of 2016 EAPN-Latvia had 36 member organizations and two associated member organizations. EAPN-Latvia operates

throughout the territory of Latvia and has over 50 partners abroad. Since June 2014 EAPN-Latvia is a full-fledged member organization of the EAPN (Europe). Since September 2014 EAPN-Latvia has the status of a public benefit organization.

In 2016 the working group of 19 experts of EAPN-Latvia worked at the committees of the Parliament of Latvia (Saeima), at the working groups of the ministries of Latvia and Riga City Council.

1) Activities:

On 4th March in Riga EAPN-Latvia authorized representative Māra Anteniške (IWO) and Baiba Giptere (ALPA) took part in the interregional NGO centres' exchange of experience conference which was organized by Riga City Council IKSD Project and society integration department and took place in NGO building.

From 29th April to 1st May in Jēkabpils region centre "Dūjas" took place the women's camp "Today is my favorite day" which was organized by EAPN-Latvia member organization "Mārtiņa Foundation" (whose chairperson of the Board is Elita Keiša).

From 11th to 17th July in Jēkabpils region centre "Dūjas" took place the summer camp for youth "Nature is our home and our challenge" organized by "Mārtiņa Foundation".

On 13th August in Riga the member organizations of EAPN-Latvia: "Women's Rights Institute", Latvian Operetta fund, Active Seniors' Alliances in Riga, Large Family Center "Family Support", and Latvian Association of Large Families took part in Latvian Civic alliance's organized Bazaar of associations and foundations.

On 15th August in Riga EAPN-Latvia chairperson of the Board Laila Balga participated in Collaboration platform's members' meeting in order to promote new ways of collaboration between nongovernmental organizations in Latvia.

On 17th August in Riga EAPN-Latvia expert Juris Dzelme (AIKNC) took part in Collaboration platform's organized discussion "Ways to involve youth to work in nongovernmental organizations (NGO)".

From 1st July to 30th August took place the EAPN-Latvia member organization's (Large Family Center "Family Support") organized charity campaign "School bag".

On 30th and 31st August in Ziemeļi was held a seminar "About attraction of funding and preparation of the financial attraction plan" for Latvian National Library specialists. This seminar was held in The Liepāja Blind Society (whose chairperson of the Board is Māris Ceirulis) Social rehabilitation and inquiry centre "Soul Refreshment Garden". It was run by experts Laila Balga (EAPN-Latvia) and Inete Ielīte (Latvian Women's NGO network).

On 12th September in Riga EAPN-Latvia representative Agnese Trofimova (Latvian Red Cross) participated in Collaboration platform's organized discussion "Intangible cultural heritage – a national value and a spiritual wealth. The role and possibilities of minorities' organizations in the heritage preservation".

On 14th September in Riga EAPN-Latvia representative Juris Dzelme (AIKNC) took part in Riga NGO building seminar "NGOs and the media - how to find common language".

On 25th August and 20th September in Riga, in LR Saeima (Latvian Parliament) EAPN-Latvia representative Juris Dzelme (AIKNC) took part in the meeting of Latvian Social Entrepreneurship Working Group.

On 13th October in Riga in the Eastern executive directorate took place the first Latgale suburb NGO forum "Platforma 2016" in which EAPN-Latvia was represented by Baiba Giptere (ALPA).

On 3rd November in Riga Laila Balga and Jānis Stjadja took part in Latvian Social Entrepreneurship association's seminar about the requirements for starting up NGO and social entrepreneurship.

On 30th November in Riga took place the Riga Citizens' Forum "Riga resounds with people speaking, thinking, acting!", which was attended by the heads of EAPN-Latvia member organizations: Laila Balga (the Board member), Baiba Giptere (ALPA), Terēzija Mackare (RASA), Aivars Lasmanis (Health Institute) and others.

On 11th December in Riga Norberts Snarskis (PINS) attended an international forum "From Social Project to Sustainable Social Enterprise", organized by the Social entrepreneurship accelerator NEW DOOR.

2) International experience:

On 4th and 5th March in Brussels the EAPN-Latvia representative Norberts Snarskis attended EUISG meeting.

On 11th and 12th March in Brussels EAPN-Latvia chairperson of the Board Laila Balga took part in EXCO meeting.

On 21st March in Brussels Māra Anteniške represented EAPN-Latvia in "Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth".

On 2nd and 3rd June in Brussels EAPN-Latvia representative Elīna Ālere-Fogele took part in FEAD Network conference "The FEAD Network: Sharing Knowledge, Finding Synergies to Break the Vicious Circle of Poverty and Deprivation".

On 16th June in Brussels EAPN-Latvia representatives Laila Balga and Norberts Snarskis participated in EAPN conference "From the Delors White Paper (1993) to the EU Pillar of Social Rights (2016), what future for the fight against poverty in Europe".

On 17th and 18th June in Brussels EAPN-Latvia representatives Laila Balga and Norberts Snarskis participated in EXCO and EUISG meetings.

In time period from 27th to 29th October in Bruges, Belgium, EAPN-Latvia experts Laila Balga (EXCO), Norberts Snarskis (EUISG) and Viktorija Lesnikova (Capacity Building) took part in EAPN (Europe) meetings and in the General Assembly.

3) Projects:

I From 5th November 2014 to 30th April 2016 EAPN-Latvia continued collaboration with Women's Rights Institute (STI) in Northern Council of Ministers' co-financed project "Support for Civil Society and Equality in Baltic". This project was conducted in partnership with Russian (Kaliningrad area), Estonian, Lithuanian, Polish, Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish partners. On 13-16th April in Riga EAPN-Latvia and Women's Rights Institute organized an international conference and an exhibition of cottage industry works which attracted more than 120 participants. As a result of this project, proposals were made for Northern Council of Ministers about the strengthening of NGO activities in Baltic Sea Region.

II From 27th June 2016 to 26th June 2017 EAPN-Latvia implements European Social Fund's (ESF) project "Subsidized workplaces for the unemployed" which involves the unemployed people of target groups into an active employment event "An event for certain groups of people", organized by State Employment Agency – 2 unemployed people older than 55 were employed this way.

4) Resources:

On 18th July EAPN-Latvia set up an office and rented a meeting room in Riga centre, in Free Trade Union Confederation building, which has the modern technical equipment and Internet.

On 15th December in Balvi (Latgale region) was opened EAPN-Latvia Project manager's Consulting centre in which within the framework of the State Employment Agency's co-financed project Zigrīda Priedeslaipa has been employed.

On 28th December in the Business Register of Latvia was registered the foundation "Fonds LAIKaMETS" (Foundation "Reflexion") whose activities are focused on the realisation of support programs for NGOs, implementing the goal set in EAPN-Latvia statutes for elimination of poverty and social exclusion in Latvia.

In year 2016 in Riga operated the EAPN-Latvia Strategic Planning working group in which were represented more than 15 member organizations, 5 sessions took place – conducted by Laila Balga and Norberts Snarskis.

In year 2016 EAPN-Latvia website www.eapn.lv was properly maintained, as well as social networks Facebook and Twitter were used for sharing information.

In year 2016 monthly newsletters (12) were prepared and spread in non-governmental sector.

In year 2016 in the EAPN-Latvia database are found more than 30 foreign partner organizations.

In year 2016 in the EAPN-Latvia was operating within Latvian Child Welfare Network (with Member of the Board Elīna Ālere-Fogele being an authorized representative).

In year 2016 the EAPN-Latvia was working in Latvian Social Entrepreneurship association. It was represented by the chairperson of the Board Laila Balga.

EAPN-Latvia income in 2016 – EUR 14 724,00. The balance on January 1, 2017 – EUR 476,00.

5) Impediments to the activities:

In Latvia there is almost no availability of international funds for financing social NGO projects; Latvian NGO fund's moderate financing is having too many projects competing for it; there are too many restricting requirements and strong lobby for State Employment Agency's, certain governmental institutions, corporations and municipalities' purchases and co-financing of projects, which doesn't encourage the sustainable development of social NGOs.

EAPN-Latvia lacks the capacity to compete with other countries' NGOs: the volunteer work, too few prepared project applications, too few qualified NGO experts, the lack of specialists with foreign language skills, not enough capacity in international networking, lack of lobbying to create a partnership (with co-financing opportunities) with governmental and municipality institutions to prepare international projects of a bigger scale.

A topical issue is the problem of migration, which in the recent years has been successfully handled in plenty of other European countries. In Latvia this problem eliminates the possibilities of EAPN-Latvia to get involved in the international projects.

The way international funds and governmental institutions see Latvian Non-governmental sector and the planning of a financial availability (including NGO social programs), is short-sighted, it prevents from sustainability, which also eliminates the possibilities of development for EAPN-Latvia.

In year 2016 funding wasn't granted to 11 projects prepared by EAPN-Latvia.

In year 2016 five projects by foreign organizations in partnership with EAPN-Latvia were not approved.

In year 2016 there was a lack of employees to organize the attraction of donations. Organization relied on volunteer work only (3 members of the Board, an accountant and 19 volunteers in the Strategic group). The website of an Organization was maintained by two volunteers and the monthly informational circular articles were prepared by another volunteer.

Too few sponsors (Riga City Council IKSD NGO Building and EU Building – free of charge rooms, State Chancellery, Latvian Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Finance, Latvian Civic alliance, European Movement in Latvia and Riga NGO Building (informative support).

A limited number of news items from EAPN-Latvia were disseminated via the press, TV and radio, which are usually paid services.

Governance and Internal Democracy

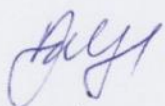
Since October 2016 EAPN-Latvia (the general meeting) has been governed by a board of three members (volunteers): Laila Balga, Elīna Ālere-Fogele and Lelde Cālīte.

The general meeting of NN members takes place once a year in March; once in three years in October, the general meeting votes for the Board, Chairperson of the Board, and Auditor of the NN. Chairperson of the Board submits the annual report to the State Revenue Service of Latvia each March.

The audit is managed by auditor Dzintra Žilde (a volunteer). The association's finances is managed by accountant Inguna Lapsina (a volunteer), EAPN-Latvia website is administered by Maris Kalejs (a volunteer).

In 2016, according to the decisions made by EAPN general meeting and the Board, the following staff worked at EAPN (Europe) structures and events: a representative to EXCO Laila Balga; a representative to EUISG Norberts Snarskis; MASS trainer Viktorija Lesnikova; PeP national coordinators Gundega Lasmane and Henriks Danusēvičs; a representative in Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth Māra Anteniške, and a representative in FEAD Network conference Elīna Ālere-Fogele.

Report drawn up in Riga, Latvia, on 24 July 2017



Laila Balga, Chairperson of the Board