**EU INCLUSION STRATEGIES GROUP**

***8-10 March 2018, Belgrade***

Minutes

**Attending:** Martina Brandstätter (EAPN AT), Ivica Golubić (EAPN HR), Stanislav Mrózek (EAPN CZ), Jürgen Schneider (EAPN DE), Ole Meldgaard (EAPN DK), Mart-Peeter Erss (EAPN EE), Jiri Sironen (EAPN FI), Johanna László (EAPN HU), Laufey Ólafsdóttir (EAPN IC), Paul Ginnell (EAPN IE – only 9 & 10 March), Letizia Cesarini Sforza (EAPN IT), Rimgailė Matulionytė (EAPN LT), Robert Urbé (EAPN LU), Maja Staleska (EAPN MK), Noel Xerri (EAPN MT), Maschinka Groot (EAPN NL), Eva Karlsen (EAPN NO), Ryszard Szarfenberg (EAPN PL), Paula Cruz (EAPN PT), Laura Greta Marin (EAPN RO), Marija Babović (EAPN RS), Graciela Malgesini (EAPN ES), Jimmie Trevett (EAPN SE), Slavomíra Mareková (EAPN SK).

**EAPN Europe:** Amana Ferro, Chiara Fratalia, Rebecca Lee

**Apologies:** EAPN BE, Douhomir Minev (EAPN BG), Marina Koukou (EAPN CY), Jeanne Dietrich (EAPN FR), Dina Vardaramatou (EAPN GR), EAPN LV, Sian Jones (EAPN Europe)

1. **Introduction**

**Marija / RS**, Chair, opened the session and introduced **Olivera Vuković**, Director of [SeConS](http://www.secons.net/), who is the founding organisation of EAPN RS and currently holds the Presidency of the Serbian Network. Ms Vuković wished participants a productive meeting and a pleasant stay in Belgrade. She remarked that this was the second time the Network hosted an EAPN Europe meeting, after the General Assembly in 2013. She explained that EAPN RS was established almost 10 years ago, and since then they have been very active at a national and EU level, even if the country is not yet a member of the EU. This cooperation has been very useful their local work, it is an added value when they can make their case with support from Europe, she said. In the next two days, they will try to show colleagues the city, including dinners in the Bohemian quarter, and in Zemun, the old part on the other side of the river. Zemun was part of the Autro-Hungarian empire, while the rest of the city was in the Ottoman Empire, so the architecture and culture are very different.

The **Minutes** were approved (EAPN UK asked for Patricia Alert’s name to be added to the attendance), and the **Agenda** agreed. All **Action Points** of the last meeting were done. Participants were reminded of the **Contact Book**, which is available on the [Members’ Room](https://www.eapn.eu/members-room/euis-group-documents/).

**ACTION POINT**

* ***Members whose profile in the Contact Book is not complete are asked to send the missing information to Chiara Fratalia (***[***policy@eapn.eu***](mailto:policy@eapn.eu)***)***
* ***Members who encounter any difficulties in setting up a profile for the Members’ Room are asked to get in touch with Rebecca Lee (***[***rebecca.lee@eapn.eu***](mailto:rebecca.lee@eapn.eu)***)***

1. **2018 Work Programme and Commission Application**

**Amana / EAPN Europe** provided a recap of the final months of the 2017 Work Programme (now complete with all links and available on the Members’ Room) and introduced the new EU ISG Work Programme for 2018, outlining the upcoming deliverables and activities.

**Discussion with members**

**Jiri / FI** – Reminder of the EMIN project, that many Networks are involved with. There are buses traveling from 24 April to 28 June, and a closing conference in November.

**Q:** Aside the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is an economic initiative and rather heavily slanted towards employment, is there any other social initiative of the EU this year?

**A:** Not really. The European Commission Work Programme for 2018 only lists the Pillar as social initiative for 2018. The Social Fairness Package, scheduled to come out on 13 March, and which is seen as the next step in the implementation of the Pillar, was termed “the last major social initiative of this Commission”.

**Q:** The Strategic Objective 2.1 speaks about “evidence- and experience-based understanding of the social and economic causes of the different dimensions of poverty”. What is that?

**A:** The Poverty Watch is essential in delivering on this objective – it is about capturing main trends and developments, as well as voices of people experiencing poverty, and feed this assessment of causes and realities into policy-making at national and EU level.

**Q:** Will there be any activity connected to the European Elections in May 2019?

**A:** Yes, the new Framework Partnership Agreement places a significant emphasis on campaigning, around 17 October, but also the elections. The EXCO is currently discussing how to take this work forward, and the staff team will keep this Group informed and involved.

**Q:** Can you provide more information about the organisation of at least 5 national events on the Poverty Watch and at least 5 on the Pillar of Social Rights?

**A:** For the first, the idea is that national networks organise events which provide visibility to their Poverty Watch report. This could range from a small roundtable discussion with policy makers, to a press briefing, to a public event. Those on the Social Pillar could also be a small event with key EAPN members and key policy makers, it could be a big public thing, and they could focus on the legislative packages, or on implementation through the Semester, or on ensuring funds for the Pillar in the next Multiannual Financial Framework etc. Whatever might work in the national context. In the contracts with the national networks, there is a total of 2500 euro (co-financing of 15% - 1500 for ‘Social Inclusion’ related work and 1000 for translation), and funds from this ‘pot’ could indeed be used for such meetings.

**Graciela / ES** – With the support of the Oviedo City Council, we are organising a seminar on 22 March, where Sérgio Aires, our President will give a lecture on the Pillar of Social Rights, the post-2020 situation, the SDGs and compliance of the Europe 2020 strategy. The European Semester Officer was invited, and we will have a debate on the future implementation of the Pillar by the Spanish administration, with the participation of the Ministry of Social Services, the Autonomous Community of Asturias and the Municipality of Oviedo, and the third sector.

1. **Mutual Learning Session: The Sustainable Development Goals**

**Marija / RS**, Chair, introduced the mutual learning session, which focuses on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The first half is dedicated to an introduction to the topic by Prof Dr Slobodan Cveijć, followed by three national presentations, and buzz group discussions with EU ISG members about how we can best use the framework at national and EU level for the fight against poverty. After lunch, Dr Sabine Freizer from the UN Women, co-organisers of this mutual learning session, will speak specifically about SDG 5 on gender equality. The afternoon also includes a press conference and press release, launching our paper on Gender and Poverty, and an exchange with EAPN members on follow up on gender and poverty.

**Part 1: The SDGs and the fight against poverty**

**Prof Dr Slobodan Cveijć** provided an overview of the Sustainable Development Goals framework (UN agenda 2030), with a specific emphasis on SDG 1 (*End poverty in all its forms everywhere*). See full PowerPoint presentation on the Members’ Room.

**National case study 1 – Finland (Jiri Sironen)**

See full PowerPoint presentation on the Members’ Room.

**National case study 2 – Poland (Ryszard Szarfenberg)**

In 2016, the Government committed to establish a multi-stakeholder Forum on the implementation of the SDGs – but it will actually be launched this June 2018. The Government organised two conferences during 2017 with a direct link to the SDGs, setting up partnerships for implementation, involving 72 organisations (mostly businesses and companies), who undertook commitments about what they will be doing to deliver on the SDGs, but the Government refused to make them public (although EAPN PL asked). Aside EAPN PL, only the Polish Red Cross and the Food Banks Federation are social organisations. In 2017, the Government also established a new entity, to ensure coherence between Poland’s own development strategy and Agenda 2030 – the results of their review will be made public this summer. EAPN PL asked the Government who are the members, but have not yet received a reply – EAPN PL trying to get involved and influence the results. There was a “1717 Campaign” (17 weeks for 17 goals in 2017), spearheaded by businesses and their social corporate responsibility departments. Another campaign is ongoing now, led also by a CSR organisation, where EAPN PL is involved. The Government speaks about the SDGs a lot, but there is little impact to be seen on the actual policies. The main stakeholders are Government and businesses, with little NGO involvement. Voluntary commitment is one way of implementation.

**National case study 3 – Macedonia (Maja Staleska)**

EAPN MK had an open panel discussion with all of its members and other NGO stakeholders, to see how to work together on implementing the Goals. ‘Partnership for Sustainable Development’ is the new European strategy for Macedonia 2016-2020, to support EU integration, which is the main objective of the national Government. The main priority areas are: employment (more and better jobs), good governance, social inclusion, sustainable environment (curb pollution), and gender equality. The National Statistics Office is following up on the indicators – they highlighted the following: need for an institutional framework and improve the coordination between all bodies involved in the process; need to mainstream the SDGs into policies and come up with concrete action plans; strengthen the capacity for monitoring. It was also pointed out that there is no budget foreseen for this implementation.

**Buzz group discussion:**

*- What is your network currently doing with the SDG framework for the fight against poverty at the national level, or what do you think you could do, following the national examples we just heard?*

*- What can EAPN as a whole do to meaningfully use this framework for advancing our objectives? What opportunities for the post-2020 strategy?*

**Feedback from discussion in buzz groups**

*ES, FI, IT, PT, RO, AGE Platform*

Governments don’t really have a strong commitment to the SDGs. The debate is driven by development NGOs (with social NGOs are more or less involved) and businesses (mainly through CSR, sustainable supply chains etc). Members raised whether we should be focusing on the SDGs or on the post-2020 strategy – they realise that there will be great overlap, but if there is a choice, the latter should take priority. The SDGs are however broader than the EPSR, so there are some opportunities there. The FI idea of having a festival is a good idea, as well as to organise common stakeholder meetings and getting many organisations onboard

*HU, MT, HR, PL, UK*

Very different national contexts, as well as very different National Networks. HU is very focused on challenging family allowance regulation, MT on housing, HR on food distribution, and the UK on the Universal Credit. These are very specific pieces of work that the Networks are dedicating themselves to, and they all fit under sub-targets of the SDGs. There is some scope to use this for advocacy. However, the SDGs seem far away and a difficult framework to adopt and adapt to these national priorities. Also, they are kind of different from Europe 2020 goals, and it’s hard for small organisations to split themselves in as many ways. Unclear how different the post-2020 strategy will be from the SDGs, need more information on that before decisions can be made.

*CZ, LT, NO, SK, DK*

We are involved with many issues which are part of the SDGs, but not with the framework as such. Some of us cooperate with UN agencies. Regarding the post-2020 strategies, it is very hard to know when nothing is on the table. When we have the discussion in June about our positioning on this, it is important to take that debate in conjunction with the SDG agenda.

*AT, MK, DE, NL, IC*

In Germany, the Network has produced two papers on this, the other Networks are just starting to look at the situation. There isn’t a lot of visibility of the issue on the work of the Governments. SDG Watch Austria has contacted EAPN AT and asked for cooperation, they decided not to formally join the coalition, but to contribute to their work.

*EE, SE, Eurodiaconia*

The SDGs are not a big subject of public debate, and there is a feeling that they are very broad and extremely general, so not so tempting for EAPN Networks to get involved. There is also not much faith in the goals being achieved. For EAPN as a whole, it would be good to focus on specific points that are of relevance for us, rather than the agenda as a whole.

**ACTION POINT**

* ***Members are asked to find out who is responsible for the SDG agenda in their country, and send that and any additional information on national action to Chiara Fratalia (***[***policy@eapn.eu***](mailto:policy@eapn.eu)***)***

**Part 2: The SDGs and Gender Equality**

**Dr Sabine Freizer**, Policy Advisor at the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, gave a presentation about SDG 5 on Gender Equality and implications for the fight against poverty. See the full presentation on the Members’ Room.

*During the coffee break, a joint press event was organised, focusing on the gendered aspects of poverty, gender inequalities across Europe, and the specific situation of the feminisation of poverty. State TV and radio were present and recording, EU media was also alerted remotely, and a press release was issued. The press debate was moderated by* ***Jasmina Krunić*** *(EAPN RS and Vice-President of EAPN Europe), and include interventions from* ***Letizia-Cesarini Sforza*** *(EAPN IT),* ***Graciela Malgesini*** *(EAPN ES), and* ***Slobodan Cveijć****, as well as* ***Milica Petrović****, Roma woman with direct experience of poverty. The press conference also served as launch event for EAPN paper on Gender and Poverty, prepared by the Women and Poverty Group. You can consult the background documents for this press venture on the Members’ Room.*

**Graciela / ES** – There is a new paper, on the links between gender-based violence and poverty. A number of Networks (IT, ES, FI, PT, RS) were involved in drafting it. It has now been uploaded on the Members’ Room, and we invite you to read it and send comments on it, so we can finalise it by the April. A third paper, on gender and in-work poverty, is planned for this year.

**Marija / RS** – Graciela and myself attended a few weeks ago, as part of the Social Platform delegation, the annual stakeholder consultation of the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE) in Vilnius. It was a very good opportunity to exchange with a wide range of actors on poverty and gender, and discuss ways forward, such as how to mainstream a gender equality perspective in the Poverty Watches, for example, as well as in the rest of our work.

**Katherine / UK** – We need to look more at intersectionality, such as women and age, women and LGBT, women with disabilities, women belonging to minority groups or migrant women etc.

**ACTION POINT**

* ***Members are asked to send comments to the Gender-Based Violence and Poverty to Graciela Malgesini (***[***gmalgesini@hotmail.com***](mailto:gmalgesini@hotmail.com)***) by the end of March.***

1. **In-Work Poverty: Taking forward the messages of the PeP meeting**

**Amana / EAPN Europe** gave feedback on the 16th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty, which was dedicated to in-work poverty, and presented the key messages of the meeting. This informed the thematic focus for the policy work of the EU ISG, as decided by the EXCO at its October meeting in Dublin. The Poverty Watch could include some reference to this, but we are also proposing a collection of best practices on the topic, whether policy or projects, and invite you to a discussion about the possible end product and methodology.

**Katherine / UK** – If we are going to work on this, we need to clarify what is our added value working on this, isn’t this a trade union topic? Also, how are we expected We have a massive problem of in-work poverty, which is because of the low wages, a culture encouraged by the top-ups provided by the Government, so we are campaigning to make trade unions aware, because they think social protection is only for people who don’t work.

**Ryszard / PL** – In-work poverty is a much more complex issue than wages, because it has to do with social welfare systems and households, so this is very much an EAPN concern.

**Philippe / AGE Europe** – We also work on employment and older workers, although this can also be termed as a trade union issue. But we see a clear added value to engage with this. We are not trying to be rivals of trade unions, but rather to ensure complementarity and to work together on issues where we can reinforce our positions.

**Laufey / IC** – A woman who was supposed to be our delegate to the PeP meeting could not attend because of an accident that required her to be hospitalised. As she was off work because of her injury, she had time to run for trade union representative, and won.

**Martina / AT** – It is a really good idea to be working on this and take forward the work of our colleagues who attended the People Experiencing Poverty Meeting.

**Mars-Peeter / EE** – In my country, trade unions are quite weak, so in-work poverty is much more our remit than it is trade unions’.

**Ole / DK** – It is not a problem at all for EAPN to focus on this. We organised an event on this in Denmark, inviting also trade unions to have their say.

**Letizia / IT** – Trade unions in Italy have been losing a lot of ground. There are also other ort of good practices we can look at, such as, for instance, from social economy and cooperatives.

**Marija / RS** – This is very much our remit, to work on this and look at good practices in sectors which are not unionised, including new ways of work, the gig economy.

**Philippe / AGE Platform** – Perhaps an idea is to look at things such as the introduction of statutory minimum wages, such as in Germany, and the impact on in-work poverty statistics.

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***The staff team will prepare a very brief Concept Note about the collection of practices, with links to the EAPN In-Work Poverty Paper and PeP Meeting Key Messages.***
* ***Members will be asked to supply good practices, including, if possible, photos and quotes – see follow-up email – to Amana Ferro (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***).***

1. **Members’ Engagement with Europe 2020 and the European Semester – training**

**Amana / EAPN** **Europe** walked members through the newest edition of the Toolkit for EAPN members about engaging with Europe 2020, the European Semester, and the European Pillar of Social Rights, highlighting key content, changes, and useful information.

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***Members are encouraged to read the Toolkit and get engaged with the processes. You can also use and adapt the template letter prepared by the EAPN staff team. If you have questions, please contact Amana Ferro (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***).***

1. **Poverty Watches – lessons learned and next steps**

**Paul / IE**, Chair, gave a brief overview of the “buddy system”, which enables new members to ask questions to and learn from more experienced EU ISG members.

*Who would like a buddy: Noel / MT, Eva / NO, Laufey / IC, Laura / RO*

*Who would like to be a buddy: Paul / IE, Katherine / UK, Johanna / HU, Robert / LU, Jiri / FI.*

*Marija and Maja can provide support to Eva and Laufey (non-EU countries)*

**Amana / EAPN Europe** proceeded to remind members of Poverty Watches, a tool inspired by the excellent work done by the Icelandic Network since the 2008 crash. It is supposed to be an overview and analysis of main trends and recent developments on poverty at the national level. It is mainly intended to be useful for members in their advocacy work, but are also an excellent basis for feeding into European processes. The idea is to draft Poverty Watches biannually as from 2018, since 2017 was a trial year. The Work Programme indicates we need to produce 20 this year – but it is possible to update the 2017 document with new data. While the Reports need to be general and overarching, a brief thematic reference to in-work poverty, which was the subject of the 16th Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty held in November 2017, could be incorporated. Last year’s Poverty Watch reports were included in a summary document and table with links (see Background Documents), sent to the Commission. It is crucial to have them ready before September, to influence the Country Reports. This session is about learning from last year’s process and defining next steps: how Reports were drafted, how they were disseminated, if there were any difficulties, if they were used in meetings with governments or EU officials, etc

*Members who actively engaged at a national level based on the Reports: LU, HU, AT, IE, IT.*

**Feedback on buzz groups discussion:**

*MK, IC, AT, NL*

IC said the first Poverty Watch was organized by the Welfare Ministry, but now it’s difficult to find statistics on poverty because of the neoliberal government. MK said a summary will be sent to the EAPN Europe staff. NL said it was a very long work, but it was sent to social partners and government and it was very much appreciated. The Dutch network said it’s important to read other countries’ Poverty Watches to learn from different experiences. All of the group will do one this year. NL and MK came up with systems to share the work between colleagues.

*DE, EE, SE, Eurodiaconia*

DE said it was a very important experience: doing such a report with the engagement of PeP makes it much more than just a data collection, because it puts forward their own views and experiences. DE used the report broadly, organised meetings with PeP, politicians and stakeholders. SE had meetings with politicians to deliver the report messages, even if they only produced a short summary. EE reported to not having had time to draft the report. DE wish to continue with this work this year, other Networks (EE, SE) are not sure whether their Network is planning one for the time being.

*PT, IT, RS, RO, ES*

The report was considered a very good initiative, but it was noted that the timing needs to be adjusted, as last year it was too late, and it could be used less. It took too long to put together and get it going, and those doing it directly in English could use it less at the national level. IT worked on putting together some pre-existing big articles, constituting a special number of their newsletter. It was a great success and they plan to work on this again this year. Given the future focus on in-work poverty, IT underlined the need to add a focus on gender. ES did not translate the report but used it anyway at the European level: it was a great success, and some sentences were even found in the Country Reports as termed in their Poverty Watch. PT could not use the report because it was too late. RO needs to check with the Network whether they can do one this year, but everybody else confirmed that they will. RS underlined the need to do it much earlier, and reported special circumstances, as the Government unit for poverty reduction was under extreme strain and recently disbanded – that prevented them from using the report with decision makers, but used it with the general public instead.

*FI, UK, HU, MT, IE*

All members (except UK) did the report in 2017. IE had already a report ready, so they just updated the data in it and then sent it to the EAPN Europe staff; they couldn’t get press attention to it but the received positive feedback from stakeholders. IE argues that the report should have a more reality-ground approach, rather than just compiling data: in fact, this approach does not attract press, and thus it could be useful to change it. IE also underlined that earlier deadlines could constitute problems for updating data, since in many countries new data come later than September. It is mainly a tool to be used at the national level, but some info at the EU level can be gathered too. UK said it will do a Poverty Watch next year if there’s the capacity to do so.

*HR, DK, PL, AGE*

DK said it was an easy task, data was available and members provided comments. There was a good informal process and cooperation between the organisations in the Network. PL set a focus on two indicators, namely severe material deprivation and extreme poverty. They launched it on October 17th and tried to get the press attention, but this was made difficult by the saturation of media space on poverty because of the many reforms undertaken by the Polish government. HR did only a summary report, because the Network is made up of many small organizations and it was difficult to have the capacity for a bigger project, so the document was seen more as an internal document. Members agree that knowing about the dissemination towards the Commission gives an added value which is not there if it is supposed to go only to national governments. PL suggested that also EOs could do this work with a special focus on their area of expertise; while AGE Platform encourages this kind of work, they say it’s too much work for their members, and that they usually work more at the European level. All three countries say they will contribute this year.

*LT, SK, CZ, NO*

LT and CZ did a Poverty Watch in 2017, but they underline they had a short time to compile data in the document. For 2018, LT wants to follow the Irish example and make a more comprehensive document. CZ reported national Caritas network doing a very similar work which is also biannual, but it does not coincide with EAPN’s schedule, so this plan would allow Networks to always have reports with updated data on poverty and social exclusion. LT and NO underline the necessity to compile the document in the national language in order to be able to affect Governments’ decisions.

**Discussion**

* National Networks are very different from each other, and so there are many different ways to use this kind of document, according to national and network specificities.
* In general, there are many good reasons to use such documents, at the very least it’s good enough to have an updated comprehensive report to be used with EU and national governments.
* It is very important to link the Report to a launch event, and no one is doing that yet.
* It is a clear task to produce the document to collect information on EU, national and local levels to have a broad and detailed view that could be used on our work.
* Usefulto learn from countries who have managed to attract press attention on how to do it, since it’s an exercise for the national level.

**Amana / EAPN Europe -** The 2017 trial process served to assess and adapt the process. We learned important lessons about the timing (we shifted it to June-September for 2018). Reports done over the summer should use last December’s statistics (latest available). The full report should be in your language, since both Desk Officers and ESOs speak it. However, the short summary should be in English and should be sent to EAPN Europe staff, so we can put together a synthesis of the main messages and recommendations. The EAPN contract money for Europe 2020 work can be used for translation. It is useful to check other countries’ work so to have a mutual learning about how others do it. The PeP involvement in the process is a clear added value and may also help attract media attention. The template letter to get in touch with your ESOs also includes references to this work.

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***Members who have not yet done so are encouraged to send summaries of their national Poverty Watches to Chiara Fratalia (***[***policy@eapn.eu***](mailto:policy@eapn.eu)***).***
* ***Members are encouraged to keep lobbying on their Poverty Watch at the national level, not least by using the template letter.***
* ***The staff team will update the Concept Note and common template for the June meeting, when this year’s process will be formally started.***

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

**Amana / EAPN Europe** provided an update on the European Semester cycle, its key drivers, and EAPN actions linked to it. See the full presentation on the Members’ Room.

*Members who have engaged at a national level around the Country Reports: IE, FI, ES, SE, PL.*

**Jiri / FI –** We got in touch with our ESO at the beginning of the year, and it was very positive to have materials in English. There is an EU committee in the Ministries and a specific one on social matters, in which EAPN has been engaging for 10-15 years. EAPN also asked to participate directly in the discussion and the request was welcomed and appreciated.

**Graciela / ES -** EAPN ES was called for the first time by the Desk Officer, they knew the Poverty Watch and the data in it, and they also had the printed document with them. Some of its messages were picked up in the Country Report, even if the extent is unclear.

**Katherine / UK -** Although we don’t have a proper Semester process, many of our messages were taken on board by Desk Officers and some remarks were accepted into the Country Report, especially regarding healthcare. Officers showed a real interest in the work.

**Robert / LU –** The Country Report mentions that there’s an ongoing discussion on 2 Scoreboard indicators, EAPN should really be engaging with this process?

*Members were then given time to continue reading Country Reports. Meanwhile, members from countries without Country Reports (RS, MK, NO, IC) met separately to share their experience as a capacity building exercise.*

**Small Group Work**

Members were split into three small groups and asked to discuss the following questions:

* Do the Reports adequately reflect the EPSR Scoreboard and the poverty target?
* Implementation of last year’s CSRs / comparison to own Poverty Watch?
* What are your 3 key messages about the Country Reports?

For full notes of the small groups, please see separate document.

*Key Messages Small Group 1 (Note Taker: Amana Ferro)*

* Indicators: we need better indicators, timelier, and the use of averages is simply not working to capture realities, even realities that are described in the Report itself.
* We need to keep pushing for CSRs explicitly on poverty.
* While many countries see an improvement (the Reports are more social), the Pillar needs to be more than just an add-on box, but properly mainstreamed throughout.

*Key Messages Small Group 2 (Note Taker: Chiara Fratalia)*

* The Scoreboard is included, but the whole Pillar should be concretely mainstreamed, rather than just including references to the Joint Employment Report.
* The gender pay gap should be more extensively reflected.
* Affordable social housing and healthcare deserve more attention.

*Key Messages Small Group 3 (Note Taker: Rebecca Lee)*

* The Country Reports fail to mention integrated anti-poverty strategies, they focus on specific forms of poverty.
* The European Commission continues to disregard the importance of civil dialogue, and the general communication fails to mention civil society as a stakeholder.
* The Country Reports are not strong enough as it comes to universal and adequate access to services (housing, school dropout), and no specific mention of migrants.

**Marija / RS** - Indicators are to be discussed, the use of averages is very dangerous. EAPN should address that, being around average doesn’t mean you’re doing good. The gender equality index is nice, from 0 to 100, to assess the performance and not the final value. What is a champion, what that means?

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***Members will be asked to supply additional comments on Country Reports, as well as to confirm their proposals for alternative CSRs – see follow-up email – to Amana Ferro (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***) before the 20th March.***
* ***The staff team will put together a brief synthesis report, complete with alternative CSRs by country, by early April.***

1. **European Pillar of Social Rights and other EU policy updates**

**Amana / EAPN Europe** presented EU social policy updates for 2018, focussing mainly on the European Pillar of Social Rights. See the full presentation on the Members’ Room.

**Discussion on the political context**

**Letizia / IT –** The current situation after the elections is very complicated, there’s nothing else we can do except wait. However, the electoral results put us five steps back.

**Johanna / HU -** We would be happy with Fidesz not gaining a two-thirds majority in the upcoming elections. They faced an unexpected big loss in a safe seat in local elections against a weird broad coalition, so let’s see what happens at the national level.

**Jimmie / SE –** There’s no clear idea yet about our upcoming elections, but a change is expected, which is a pity, as there is currently a Social-Democratic government in place.

**Philippe / AGE –** In Germany, the large coalition is the same as the previous government, but many Ministers changed and many old personalities are still there.

**Katherine / UK –** Regarding Brexit, we have a minority government and the situation is unstable. It’s possible for the Government to fall in 2019. We should have a two-thirds majority to try and remain in the EU, and the populist right is a serious threat. With Brexit, the EU budget would be much lower, and this seriously affects EU funding for programmes and policies.

**Paul / IE –** Brexit also raised the issue of the border between UK and IE, and there’s still no reconciliation between the two scenarios of a soft and a hard border. Negotiators involved in Brexit want to change everything and nothing at the same time. The budget reduction caused by Brexit is estimated to be of 10-12%.

**Robert / LU -** France and Germany are joining forces to speed up with EU reforms, while the Nordic countries + IE and NL are opposed to this, as they would like to preserve the status quo and avoid different “speeds”.

**Philippe / AGE –** Brexit will probably negatively impact the MFF, as it will reduce the overall EU budget. The money loss could be covered with money from other sources, or just simply result in budget cuts. The countries Robert mentioned (Nordic countries + IE, NL) are specifically against paying more to cover the hole left by Brexit. This thing has not been sorted yet, but maybe the absence of Schäuble will help. This could be also a threat to EAPN’s funding.

**Discussion on the Social Pillar:**

**Jiri / FI –** As regards the Social Fairness Package, a Finnish member of the Permanent Representation confirmed that there will be no action on the European Social Security Number, as some members opposed it. He mentioned also some minor actions regarding the European Labour Authority.

**Noel / MT -** As regards the implementation of the EPSR, did the Commission ask for any inputs or comments? It’s a shame that the action on the ESSN has been dropped, since portability was one of the key messages of the 16th PeP meeting.

**Ryszard / PL –** In PL trade unions involvement is crucial in the implementation process of the EPSR. I was invited by them to do some work on the principle on minimum income. Maybe they have some special funding from the EU to do some work, and it would be better to join them on that rather than doing the same work separately. Maybe we should provide some special focus on poverty in their work.

**Paul / IE –** I took part in the drafting of the Pillar and in the proclamation ceremony in Gothenburg. Many Member States were worried of the additional legal implication that the Pillar could impose on them, and that’s why the Commission made clear that its principles do not impose extra obligations on them. Trade unions were very much involved throughout the whole process, and I agree we should engage with them and their work.

**Katherine / UK –** It worries me that there’s no other social initiative for the future except for the Social Pillar, given also the uncertainty regarding the next Commission. Has the ExCo got a plan B in case this initiative doesn’t go any further? It’s rather clear why the Commission keeps pushing for free movement of labour: there’s the need of cross-border regulation and supranational authorities, and Members States are likely to complain about that. Now there are more Eurosceptic countries than before, and we need to know where we stand with regards of control of European social security budgets.

**Slavomíra / SK –** The downside of labour mobility is that if people working abroad get sick, they might not have any social protection. Since conditionality is linked to working in the same country, mobility might produce more poverty for older people in the future.

**Jiri / FI –** Trade unions are very active on actions on the Pillar, because it can help achieve fairer working conditions. This is a subject that has witnessed no new regulations for decades. It is true that some countries oppose the Pillar as they are worried about its potential legal obligations.

**Jiri / FI,** Chair, reminded that the 2018 Work programme calls for 5 national events on the Pillar and 5 national events to disseminate Poverty Watches. He then called for members to share with others their national engagement on the Pillar.

**Paula / PT –** On the 16th March we will host a small conference on the Pillar, poverty and obstacles to employment, which is organized by the Commission at the national level. The Commission will present the challenges ahead and an expert from Bruegel will address the challenges of inclusive growth.

**Letizia / IT –** We’re scared of what’s happening in Europe, we need to try and keep the compass steady. We have to work on the Pillar and be very careful about the institutional and political levels, since things are really bad now. We need to keep in mind that as a single member State there’s very little we can do: our place is in Europe fighting for a social Europe. The Italian network plans a national event as of mid-April to present the national poverty watch; this would be also a good moment to present the Pillar, we’re trying to get representatives from government and other institutions. We’re also trying to link the poverty watch with the Pillar, on which we plan a meeting with the third sector.

**Laufey / IC –** We hosted a small conference on basic income a couple of weeks ago, and we plan on having a conference on food banks and food aid next month.

**Jiri / FI –** We’re having a seminar in the European Parliament on minimum income and the Pillar, even if this cannot be considered as an event like the others in the Work Programme. We’re also hosting a small event with our Board, some academics and other people on the future of social Europe and the Pillar.

**Letizia / IT –** Before having an event on the Pillar we would like to wait and see how it’s going, so it would be better to have it in the second part of the year to assess what has been done. Does the EAPN Europe staff need a report in English with signatures to report to the Commission?

**Katherine / UK –** We’re planning on having three policy roundtables with EMIN and we want to use the materials on that to do our Poverty Watch event. Since they’re the same source of funding, would this be double reporting?

**Paula / PT –** We’re having an event on minimum income, but outside the EMIN project.

**Amana / EAPN Europe –** Events under the EMIN project cannot count as the ones in our Work Programme, since both our funding comes from the European Commission. Mixed events like the Italian one are difficult to report, because they could apply to both categories; in this case, we have to be creative. I remind you that they could also be small events. Nothing needs to be in English since it’s a national event; for the reporting, what we need is the agenda, some pictures, a press item on your website, or other such evidence.

*Members agree with the draft action plan on the EPSR, including national events.*

*Members willing to work on Scoreboard indicators: PL, LT, LU, RS, DK, Eurodiaconia.*

**Amana / EAPN Europe** explained that it would be difficult to have the policy conference and the EU ISG / EXCO meetings during the time the EMIN buses are still away. This, particularly as the topic of the policy conference is the EPSR & social protection, so it is very difficult to do without EMIN. An idea was to combine the return & closing ceremony of the buses (28 June) with the EAPN events, however there is a high-level event on the Pillar in Sofia on the 27th June. The reason we have the policy conference in Brussels is to get key policymakers in there, but this can’t be done if the majority of them is in Sofia. The EXCO and the Bureau will have the final decision, and this won’t be decided before Easter.

*There’s no strong opposition to next EU ISG being held in the first week of July (5-7 July).*

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***The staff team will prepare a Briefing on the Social Fairness Package as soon as released, followed by a full response later in April***
* ***Members will be asked to provide input to the full response to the Social Fairness Package – see follow-up email – to Sian Jones (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***)***
* ***The staff team will set up an email cluster of people interested in working on the Social Scoreboard and identify opportunities to engage.***
* ***Members will be asked to send input on the Quality and Inclusive Education paper – see follow-up email – to Amana Ferro (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***) and Chiara Fratalia (***[***policy@eapn.eu***](mailto:policy@eapn.eu)***).***
* ***Members will continue engagement at the national level and begin organizing national events, while keeping the staff team (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***) informed.***

1. **Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth**

**Amana / EAPN Europe** provided an update about this year’s Annual Convention, to take place on 27 April in Brussels, on the topic of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Participation: EAPN members should get in touch with their Ministries (Employment and Social Affairs, or SPC / EMCO members) to try to obtain places on the national delegations. It’s also worth contacting permanent representations in case invitations were sent to them. Invited speakers have their travel covered outside of delegations – we proposed a number of names, and you may be contacted directly. We always state the link with the PeP Meeting and we push for a PeP speaker, as well as for the EAPN President to speak in the closing plenary – Leo (EAPN Director) is following this up. For the side-event, we are proposing: How quality employment can be a way out of poverty for those who can work, and how is the Pillar is responding to these issues, with a link to access to social protection for workers and for those who cannot work. We hope to do this with the European Trade Union Confederation and the European Economic and Social Committee, and invite a speaker from the Secretariat General of the European Commission. Conny Reuter from SOLIDAR will be moderating. We will also be developing Key Messages, which you will be invited to comment on.

*Members who have secured a spot on the national delegation: LU, FI*

*Members who are waiting for a response: HR, PL, NO, DE, PT, IT, ES, IE*

**Discussion with members**

* It feels like a missed opportunity not to promote EMIN, with the bus just launched earlier that very week
* Is it still worth engaging, as the agenda is a mess and there are no opportunities to discuss content?
* It is always a good idea to attend, as the networking with the national delegations can be very useful
* We push for civil dialogue, and the Commission sees the Convention as their key moment for this, so it is important for us to engage

**ACTION POINT**

* ***Members should reach out to their Governments and try to obtain places in the national delegations, and keep the staff team (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***) informed.***
* ***Members are asked to provide feedback and input for the Annual Convention Key Messages – see follow-up email – to the staff team (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***).***

1. **Human Impact of Austerity**

**Amana / EAPN Europe** introduced the topic. The idea is to produce a piece of work on the human impact of austerity, which can be anything: report, video, poster, website or blog, song, postcards etc. Take the creative presentations for PeP meetings as a starting point. We are trying to encourage more messages from the ground, and would like to produce something which can also be useful at national level. There is no dedicated funding apart from the general budget line for deliverables. What are some ideas about how best to do this?

**Discussion with members**

* Many centres have closed down in the UK (advice; youth; welfare; libraries; etc). We could present images of closed spaces and make a Facebook page.
* Are we sure we are still talking about austerity now, or funding policy & political choices?
* In Italy, miles of empty factories is another impact. Austerity also makes some people very rich – this could be a different angle
* A theme of the sheer existence of foodbanks could be very strong.
* We could present different things from different countries; showing the wide-ranging impacts.
* Human stories have impact, eg Humans of New York. This could also be a publication, but an artsy one.
* It could be a collection of personal stories, such as Voices from the Poverty Line.
* We could make a poster with data: UK closed # centres; IT closed # factories etc.
* Elke’s idea is a 1-minute video from each country which can be subtitled and easily compiled. Disseminating this on social media can be a good way of reaching decision-makers.
* What do we mean by austerity? Central banks get more money than ever, and there’s never been expenditure in Estonia for instance.
* Maybe it is about bad policy now, coming out of austerity. With the crisis as an excuse.
* It can be interesting to have individual stories, but then to add the data/context to avoid individualising the issue.
* A poster worked well in Italy in the past, but we need to think about the target here.
* It could be seen as a long-term campaign with different activities which are short-term and attract different audiences. Slogan: is it true that the poor will always be poor? Is austerity the answer?
* Sometimes faces individualize things too much and reinforces helplessness. There’s a backlash of showing ‘wounds’ on Facebook.
* In Lithuania,we did a photo contest and young people photographed how they experience exclusion. Votes were held on facebook. It was very successful. We gave a prize of a workshop with a professional photographer; there was a meeting with local activists, and an exhibition in parliament.
* We need to send a clear message: on either austerity or bad policy. Eg RS: there are cuts to pensions, yet a crazy sum of money spent on helicopters.
* Postcards with short messages, accordion style could work; and can be put in a newsletter too. Eg Roma are excluded from housing. Or because you have 149 EUR you are not considered unemployed. 2% of GDP in Slovakia has been given to NATO for instance.
* Poverty as a structural problem can be the message: in terms of policies but also literally buildings.
* Are we saying rather that people are impacted by political decisions? Eurostat published statistics that the average social spending is 20% of GDP which is actually an increase. The problem is that amounts for individuals didn’t increase, as the number of individuals in poverty has increased: this is the real situation. It is difficult to pin this all on cuts therefore.

*Members interested in taking this (and the good practices) forward: LT, IC, SK, NL.*

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***Staff team (including comms) will prepare a Concept Note, pooling all the above ideas and formulating options, with links and examples. Members are asked to provide input (also involving their comms) to the staff team (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***) and the final Note will be discussed and a decision made at the June meeting.***

1. **Follow-Up of Ongoing Work**

**Amana / EAPN Europe** presented an update on various policy areas: poverty and human rights (the Handbook will be ready by end March); migration (members are looking the the Action Plan, the EXCO will discuss the paper); Roma issues (email cluster, engagement with the stakeholder dialogues of DJ Justice and the annual European Roma Platform); energy poverty (email cluster, coalition at Brussels level, project that EAPN is involved with, booklet with Parliament etc); gender (see session during the first day).

*Members working on migration*

* **Letizia / EAPN IT** – We are doing a lot of work with our member organisations on refugees/asylum seekers. Presenting new shelters & accommodation. Working on a new project – to be presented on 14 April – for which we asked some of you to partner, though this is not compulsory. We are looking at how the welcoming system is working.
* **Paula / EAPN PT** – We are developing case studies on the situation of refugees and integration, which we are finalising now.

**Discussion with members**

* *EAPN IC:* We are organising a conference on gender & poverty, working with a Federation, and Workers’ Union. This will be around September. Lots of low-wage women are affected by in-work poverty & austerity eg hospital cleaners and low-paid carers / kindergarten carers who do the same work for less pay.
* *EAPN FI:* We launched a citizens’ initiative to raise primary & social assistance benefits. There are also 10 different happenings under EMIN.
* *EAPN UK:* There is Scotland’s living wage campaign; ‘The Voice’ for Scottish government, which is experience panels; 3 policy roundtables under EMIN: 1 – basic income. 1 – adequacy. 1 – everything but in a work context. In England, there are 3 reality-on-the-ground groups. 1 on Minimum Income, 1 on black parents & children, and 1 on young people with ATD Fourth World. 2 are already done. There will be an event during the bus visit. A roundtable in Leicester Cathedral with 3 speakers. The bus itself with Trade Unions’ involvement. Final conference. Trying to get politicians to do selfies supporting EMIN, 1 labour MP did it. We also applied for funding for work with migrants in a cultural framework, but no final decision yet.
* *EAPN PT:* We are continuing the Barometer of ESF work since the Task Force ended. There is a questionnaire launched though the ExCo and now we have 20+ answers and will start a next report. Sergio & two colleagues are also coordinating a National observatory to end poverty at national level. This work is done together with EAPN Spain.
* *EAPN CZ:* We have been focusing on elderly poverty. 5 conferences in 5 cities, inviting those from small cities & local government. It has been inspiring for us. To be shared with AGE. Our big topic over years is over-indebtedness, as the biggest threat to working people. We’d like to push this in EAPN, including in the PeP meeting.
* *AGE Platform*: We have 1 reflection on intergenerational fairness. How much money should be put into pensions? What are the trade-offs? What should we say about all these pension reforms? We follow 2 Commission reports (ageing report – long-term projections on costs of ageing up to 2060 & how pension level evolves; all branches of social security & revenues and Pension Adequacy report – diff groups & careers; theoretical projection based on current laws into the future). We pushed for different salaries, ie not just full-time salaries with no breaks.
* *EAPN NL:* We are producing an article on mental health problems & poverty in the Netherlands. We compared the situation with Italy, but it would be good to compare with other countries.

*Members working on education: IT, ES, SK, DK, AGE, IS, MK.*

**ACTION POINTS**

* ***Members interested in working more closely on the following topics should get in touch with the relevant contact:***
* ***Roma issues – Amana Ferro (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***)***
* ***Education and training – Amana Ferro (***[***amana.ferro@eapn.eu***](mailto:amana.ferro@eapn.eu)***)***
* ***Energy poverty – Sian Jones (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***)***
* ***Migration – Sian Jones (***[***sian.jones@eapn.eu***](mailto:sian.jones@eapn.eu)***)***
* ***Monitoring of the 20% of ESF for poverty – Paula Cruz (***[***paula.cruz@eapn.pt***](mailto:paula.cruz@eapn.pt)***)***
* ***Over-indebtedness – Stanislas Mrózek (***[***s.mrozek@slezskadiakonie.cz***](mailto:s.mrozek@slezskadiakonie.cz)***)***
* ***Pension adequacy and elderly poverty – Philippe Seidel (***[***philippe.seidel@age-platform.eu***](mailto:philippe.seidel@age-platform.eu)***)***
* ***Mental health and poverty – Maschinka Groot (***[***mascha\_9998@hotmail.com***](mailto:mascha_9998@hotmail.com)***)***

1. **Working methods, evaluation, and next meeting**

**Amana / EAPN Europe** presented a proposal for a Protocol for adopting common policy positions & opt-clauses, to be discussed and adopted at the forthcoming EXCO meeting.

**Discussion with members**

* Will papers be voted now? Will the EXCO get a final vote on EU ISG work?
* Will we be publicly name those disagreeing and include statements of dissent?
* The rights & duties of all groups & instruments need to be explained.
* What is people disagree not with papers, but with core EAPN values?
* What constitutes a policy position, does it include Semester work?

**ACTION POINT**

* ***Members are invited to feed their concerns to their EXCO member before 21 March, so that they can bring them up once the paper is discussed at their next meeting in Spain.***

**Rebecca / EAPN Europe** – We always had quite clear dissemination plans for particular documents for the EU level, but it is equally important to understand how our deliverables are used in a national context. Last year we tried to gather this information through some Google forms online, about both dissemination as well as impact. The proposal now is to fill in the form in the background documents, as well as haver a show of hands regarding who has disseminated our latest publication, the Response to the AGS / JER?

*Who disseminated the AGS Response: IE, ES, IT, PT, FI*

**Evaluation of the meeting and mutual learning session**

**Eva** **/ NO** – Interesting but exhausting! I have gained Ideas of how to take forward our Network’s transformation.

**Laufey** **/ IC** – Bit overwhelming and not always very clear what’s relevant for non-EU members. But a good experience and good to get on board with the work (although helped on documents in the past).

**Katherine** **/ UK** - Top-quality entertainment is great & supportive. Thanks to the Serbian network & thanks to Amana who carried a lot. The Mutual Learning session was interesting but needs more thought on the SDGs. The EU ISG meeting was as usual, and frustrating for me as we will not be taking forward the Pillar. Feel quite sad as feel there is no point.

**Martina** **/ EAPN AT** – The meetings are motivating. Always think it would be good to have a capacity building session for this group on ways of working and feeding in. Important for other networks too, to know how they can get involved in the processes.

**Philippe** **/ AGE** – As a fellow membership organisation, it’s parallel to what we do so interesting to see how we deal with similar processes/challenges. This influences our reflections. The EU agenda parts are less useful but that’s normal. Why some work on the MFF for instance or not, is interesting however.

**Paul / IE** – It is very important for us to have both European Organisations present, so appreciate your presence. A thank you to Amana, and also Sian who helped prepare by phone. To the Serbian network who organised it very well; to Rebecca & Chiara for the good support, and to all members for the good engagement.

**Amana / EAPN Europe** thanked the Serbian network, the Steering Group who’ve worked a lot behind the scenes, all members for being so supportive, and Chiara and Rebecca.

**Dates of next meetings**

* Potentially 5-7 July, in Brussels – with Policy Conference; the EXCO will decide, so **don’t book any flights till you are prompted to do so!**
* 27-29 September, in Vienna – with General Assembly; the EU ISG meeting will only last for one day, as the second day will be joint strategic thinking with the EXCO.