



EAPN Ireland Annual Report 2017

EAPN Ireland is a membership organisation in the Community sector in Ireland. It has a membership of over 200 organisations and individuals committed to the eradication of poverty.

1. Influencing National Governments for Better Policies: Advocacy, Lobbying and Policy-Making linked to European Level developments

EAPN Ireland's policy work is coordinated through the Policy Group, involving representatives from a number of our member organisations across different groups in society. In 2017 The Policy Group contributed to policy submissions and the 2018 Poverty Briefing. In 2016 the Group began to host lunchtime discussions on key issues and it organised two of these in 2017.

Budget 2018

In advance of Budget 2018 we made our annual pre-budget submission. The submission listed 16 headline demands. EAPN Ireland also participated in the Department of Social Protection Pre-Budget Forum in July and contributed in particular to the debate on Poverty Proofing. The network reacted to the announcements in Budget 2018 with a press release highlighting the importance that they were part of an ambitious and integrated plan aimed at reducing poverty.

Future of Europe Debate

In 2016 the European Commission published a White paper outline five possibilities for the future of the EU. These ranged from members states doing more together, to doing less, or some member states going it alone on some policy areas while others could opt out. In 2016 EAPN Ireland made a written submission to the European Commission and the Irish Government. In November 2017 EAPN Ireland made a presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Union Affairs. The submission highlighted the need for the EU to implement policies consistent with both its founding values of '*respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities*' and with the sustainable social, environmental and economic vision it has signed up to under the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This debate continues into 2018 with the Irish Government initiating a wider consultation among citizens.

European Semester and Europe 2020 Strategy

Since 2010 most of the EU's engagement with its Member States on both its economic and its social goals, has been through what is called the European Semester. This includes the delivery on the poverty target in the Europe 2020 strategy. The overall process has been difficult and has resulted in increased poverty both in Ireland and throughout the EU. Despite some recent progress there were still 118 million people in poverty and social exclusion in the EU and almost 395,000 people in consistent poverty in Ireland. EAPN Ireland engages with this process at national level and through its European network, presenting analysis and proposals on a regular basis. As part of this process Paul Ginnell met with European Commissioner Moscovici during his visit to Dublin in January 2017 and in April the EAPN Ireland Policy Group made a submission to Irish

Government's National Reform Programme. Much of the work of EAPN Ireland on the Semester and Europe 2020 is also through the Better Europe Alliance, which is Co-ordinated by EAPN Ireland.

European Pillar of Social Rights

In 2016 the European Commission started a consultation process to develop a European Pillar of Social Rights. EAPN Ireland both directly and through the European network made submissions and participated in events to inform the Pillar.

Poverty Briefing 2018

Following on from its Poverty Briefing 2015 work got underway in 2017 on a new Poverty Briefing which was published in January 2018. The **Poverty Briefing 2018 and Proposals for a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion** outlines that poverty levels are now higher than when the current targets to reduce it were set. It outlines what many of the current issues are across a range of policy issues and how this impacts on different people in society. As Ireland begins to consult on a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2018-2021 the Briefing includes proposals for the type of strategy that is needed.

Communications

Despite its limited resources EAPN Ireland places importance on communicating our message and activities with members and the wider public as a means of bringing about change. During 2017 we continued to produce the NewsFlash e-newsletter which goes to over 2,000 recipients to update them on activities of EAPN Ireland and our European network as well as other national and European news. EAPN Ireland also kept up its activity on Twitter and Facebook and has started the process of developing a new website. There were also a number of Press releases throughout the year.

Publications and Submissions

EAPN Ireland produced a range of publications and submissions during 2017. These are available on www.eapn.ie

2. Participation of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion in Internal and External Workings of the National Network

European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

In 2017 the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty took place in November with a focus on in-work poverty. Robin Hanan went as Irish Coordinator and facilitated a workshop at the meeting and Dean Burke (Fatima Groups United) presented the issues from a local experience.

Social Inclusion Forum and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion

EAPN Ireland again joined with Community Work Ireland to carry out a series of preparatory workshops and focus groups in advance of the annual Social Inclusion Forum (SIF). The 2017 Forum took place on the 25th May. In advance of this two homeless organisations supported EAPN Ireland to organise a focus group with people who had experience of homelessness. EAPN Ireland also co-organised a meeting in Dublin on the eve of the SIF to plan participation and presentation of key messages from the preparatory workshops and focus groups. After the Forum EAPN Ireland held regional meetings in Longford and Limerick on the Government's planned new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. All of these activities are organised to try to ensure the direct participation of those experiencing the issues.

3. Development and Growth of the Network (including growth and training and capacity building actions)

In 2017 EAPN Ireland held a range of training events for members and others committed to the eradication of poverty.

Sustainable Development Goals

EAPN Ireland partnered with Comhlámh in November 2016 and March 2017 to organise two rounds of training workshops on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The workshops entitled '*Connecting the Dots*' used the UN Goals as a way of building the capacity of local community organisations and advocates to address poverty issues. The workshops were organised in Cork, Dublin and Galway. The first round involved an introduction to the UN Goals while the second built participants capacity to use the Goals in their work.

The EU, its Parliament and the Fight Against Poverty

Workshops took place in each of the three EU constituencies in Ireland on understanding how best to influence and use EU policy in the fight against poverty. The workshops had two parts, the first of which focused on building the capacity of participants to understand EU policy while the second involved an opportunity to engage with an Irish Member of the European Parliament (MEP). The meeting in the Dublin constituency involved Sein Fein MEP Lynn Boylan; the workshop in Sligo in the Midlands/North-West Constituency was with Independent MEP Marian Harkin, while Fine Gael MEP Sean Kelly from the South Constituency participated in the workshop in Waterford.

Workshop on access to adequate social welfare

Following our Annual General Meeting in June 2017 we held a workshop entitled "*Winning the public debate on welfare*". The workshop discussion was led by an input from Rachel Broady of National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Manchester and Salford, UK. The NUJ members are from the UK and Ireland and Rachel highlighted the work being done by the NUJ to promote positive approaches to reporting on poverty and addressing the stereotyping of people living in poverty. The workshop was part of wider work begin done by EAPN Ireland on the issue of access to an adequate social welfare for everyone who needs it. This work is linked to a two-year European campaign led by the European Minimum Income Network.

4. Governance and Internal Democracy (including internal governance, respect of statutory requirements, management in the network and funding).

EAPN (Europe)

In 2017 EAPN Ireland continued to play an active role in EAPN.

- Tess Murphy is the Executive Committee ExCo representative.
- Paul Ginnell is the EUISG representative and a co-Chairperson of this group.
- EAPN Ireland also participated in two Task Forces. Robin Hanan was a member of the Task Force on Migration and Poverty. Aiden Lloyd was a member of the Task Force which produced a toolkit on using Human Rights to address Poverty and Social Exclusion.
- In October 2017 EAPN Ireland hosted the EAPN General Assembly (AGM) in the F2 Centre in Rialto in Dublin. The delegates participated in three days of meetings and site visits.
- Paul Ginnell and Michael Mackey, an EAPN Ireland Board member, both made presentations at the annual EAPN's annual conference in Brussels in June and at their seminar in December on the European Semester and Pillar of Social Rights in the European Parliament.

EAPN Castilla y León Pilot Project

EAPN Ireland is a partner in the EU funded PACT initiative in the Spanish region of Castilla y León. The project is piloting new ways to bring about changes in the way social services are delivered so as to better meet the needs of families at risk of social exclusion.

Better Europe Alliance

In 2014 EAPN Ireland brought together, and continues to support, the Better Europe Alliance of Irish Civil Society Organisations working for a Social and Sustainable Europe. There are 14 members in the Alliance. During 2017 the Alliance published its response to the European Commission's 2017 Country Report for Ireland, which it circulated widely, and also met with the European Semester Officer in the European Commission office in Dublin to present the report. In October the Alliance met with the European Commission fact-finding mission from Brussels to present its analysis of social, economic and environmental issues related to the European Semester process and Europe 2020 strategy.

Coalition 2030

EAPN Ireland is an active member of the Irish Coalition of civil society organisations which has come together to ensure that Ireland is effectively implementing policies to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Ireland. The Coalition was officially launched in March 2017 and during the year Robin Hanan was a member of the Coalition's steering group.

Other Alliances

EAPN Ireland is also a member of the Equality and Rights Alliance and the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Initiative.

Membership

Despite major changes in the community sector, particularly over the past 10 years, EAPN Ireland has over 200 members. These members are organisations and individuals committed to ending the causes and consequences of poverty.

Board

The Board of EAPN Ireland is made up of members and plays an important role in providing leadership to the organisation. It met six times during 2017, including for one strategic planning meeting in March with an external facilitator.

Staff

In 2017 EAPN Ireland had three part-time staff:

- Robin Hanan, Director ó Retired at the end of 2017
- Paul Ginnell, Policy Officer ó Director from January 2018
- Maureen Gondipon, Administration and Finance Officer

Between September and November 2017 the EAPN Ireland team was joined by François De Ganck who made a great contribution during his 10 week internship.

Funding

EAPN Ireland is in the middle of three years of core funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development. It also accesses resources from a range of other sources, including membership fees.

EAPN Ireland CLG is core funded by the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development through Pobal.

