



Association „EAPN-Latvia”

www.eapn.lv

NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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 2017 EAPN-Latvia cooperated with Latvian Ministry of Welfare, having two representatives to the Social inclusion policy coordination committee (Elina Alere-Fogele and Marite Rozentale), one representative – to the Gender equality committee (Laila Balga), National council for disability affairs (Janis Stjadja), Council for senior affairs (Dzintra Zilde), Council for the development of social services (Agita Pleiko) and to the European support fund's for the most deprived persons (FEAD) Operational programme (Baiba Svetlana Rozenberga); cooperated with the Riga City Council, having one representative to the Society integration advisory board (Baiba Giptere).

From February 25th, 2015, EAPN-Latvia is a member organization of the NGO and Cabinet of Ministers' memorandum of cooperation; in 2017 two EAPN-Latvia representatives were approved to the Memorandum Board (Laila Balga and Terezija Mackare).

In addition to that, the EAPN-Latvia group of 10 experts worked in the committees and working groups of the Parliament (Saeima) of the Republic of Latvia, ministry committees, councils and working groups, as well as in Riga City Council institutions.

2) Measures taken to implement EU policies in Latvia:

On January 17th, members of the European Parliament from Latvia were informed about the EAPN's position regarding the EP report on the European Pillar of Social Rights;

On February 22nd Elina Alere-Fogele participated in the 4th FEAD network meeting „The good practice in food selection” in Brussels, Belgium.

On March 16th-18th Inese Vintisa participated in the SMES Europe XIV European conference „Dignity and Well-being: together, exchange for changing” in Lisbon, Portugal.

On April 24th Gunta Kelle and Inete Ielite participated in the Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth in Brussels, Belgium as a part of the Ministry of Welfare delegation.

On May 11th Elina Alere-Fogele made a presentation at the Caritas Czech Republic conference „Let's prevent debt traps!” in Prague, Czech Republic.

On May 24th, EAPN-Latvia submitted its guidelines on the subject „National Inputs to the Assessment of the implementation of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership in establishment of the national implementation bodies of ESI Funds” to the EU Funds, Climate and Energy coordinator, CEE Bankwatch Network.

On May 30th-31st Norberts Snarskis participated in the Malta presidency high-level event „Celebrating success and looking ahead” organized by the European Commission in Valletta, Malta.

European Minimum Income Network (EMIN-2)

On January 1, 2017, the implementation of the two-year EMIN-2 project „Journey for better Minimum Income Schemes and a better Europe” was started. This project is being implemented in 25 member states of the European Union and its budget is EUR 35 360. The project is managed by one national coordinator (Laila Balga) and six regional coordinators (Elina Alere-Fogele, Lelde Calite, Marite Rozentale, Baiba Giptere, Valda Stadgale and Janis Stjadja), as well as an IT consultant Maris Kalejs. It involves no less than 200 people from all regions of Latvia. Within the framework of this project, it is planned to establish the European Minimum Income Network in Latvia, involving a significant number of NGOs, trade unions, state institutions, municipalities and private companies.

On March 27th, 2017 in Brussels, Belgium, and on September 25th-26th in Leuven, Belgium, Laila Balga participated in the meetings of national coordinators of the EMIN-2 project.

EAPN (Europe) PeP Conference

On March 29th - 31st 2017 in Riga EAPN-Latvia organized and hosted the EAPN (Europe) PeP programme national coordinators' conference, which was attended by NGO specialists from 23 European countries (administrated by Laila Balga). The conference was financed by EAPN (Europe). 10 EAPN-Latvia representatives had a discussion with the European partners at this conference.

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

Since 2014 the EAPN-Latvia representative (public official Laila Balga) is authorized to work in the European Union Structural Funds' and the Cohesion Fund's monitoring committee of the 2014-2020 planning period.

In addition to that, the EAPN-Latvia experts control the use of 20% of the European Social Fund on programmes aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion.

4) Advocacy and lobbying:

On January 17th EAPN-Latvia in cooperation with LBLT submitted proposals for the amendments to the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child to the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia.

On March 8th, the EAPN-Latvia working group (Norbert Snarskis and Henriks Danusevics) submitted proposals “On determining the minimum income” to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia.

On March 27th, Imants Keiss and Valija Eize participated in the rally (protest meeting) on the abolition of the real estate tax for the single dwelling.

At the request of the Latvian Large Families Association (Imants Keiss) on July 11th the Latvian Ministry of Justice provided information on the number of executable cases for debt collection and the debt amounts for families.

On October 3rd EAPN-Latvia representatives participated in the joint meeting of the Saeima Commission for social and labour affairs and the Commission for human rights and public affairs regarding the proposals from NGOs for reducing poverty and social exclusion in Latvia.

Latvian NGO Fund project

From February 1st to October 31st 2017 a project funded by the Society Integration Foundation was implemented („Supporting the contribution of NGOs to protecting the interests of people who experience poverty”). Budget: 6970 EUR. This project was managed by two administrative employees (Lelde Calite and Inguna Lapsina). The project involved 10 NGO experts (Lelde Calite, Elina Alere-Fogele, Norberts Snarskis, Baiba Giptere, Juris Dzelme, Sergejs Mahnovs, Janis Stjadja, Marite Rozentale, Sarma Brauna, Vija Ahunzjanova) and more than 80 people from all Latvian regions. During this project EAPN-Latvia prepared and submitted 23 proposals to 4 commissions of the Latvian Parliament (Saeima), 5 ministries and 2 committees of the Riga City Council, as well as entered into negotiations on reducing social exclusion in Latvia.

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

The programme was managed by one PeP national coordinator (Henriks Danusevics) and two EAPN-Latvia administrative employees (Laila Balga and Inna Sumanska). The programme also involved 19 NGO experts, a PR consultant, IT consultant and a translator.

I. From January 1st to December 31st 2017 a support programme for people experiencing poverty (PeP - People Experiencing Poverty) was implemented in Latvia on the topic "Raising public awareness of the decent income". Budget of this programme: 7000 EUR (50% co-financing). The programme involved more than 150 people from all regions of Latvia. With the additional funding from EAPN (Europe), it also involved participation in the annual conference of people living in poverty that took place in Brussels on November 9th-10th 2017. Four EAPN-Latvia representatives (Henriks Danusevics, Marite Rozentale, Zigrīda Priedeslaipa and Kaspars Riekstins) participated in this conference.

On November 15th the EAPN-Latvia PeP delegation had a meeting with the management of the Saeima Commission for social and labour affairs regarding the support for the people who experience poverty.

II. From January 1st to December 31st 2017 the European Strategy 2020 was implemented in Latvia. Budget: 1300 EUR (15% co-financing). More than 70 people from the Kurzeme region were involved in this programme.

III. From January 1st to December 31st 2017 EAPN-Latvia prepared three EAPN (Europe) brochures, translated from English into Latvian. Budget: 1000 EUR (15% co-financing). These brochures are now available on the EAPN-Latvia website.

Development and Growth of the Network

EAPN-Latvia was founded on November 2013 by seven founding member organizations. At the end of 2017 EAPN-Latvia had 35 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.

1) Activities:

In December 2016 the joint project "Support Programme for Daugava" was prepared by Latvian society "Daugava" in St. Petersburg and the Foundation "Children of Siberia". On January 12th, 2017 it was submitted to the Society Integration Foundation.

On March 2nd-3rd EAPN-Latvia representatives participated in the Social entrepreneurship conference organized by the Ministry of Welfare, Latvian Social Entrepreneurship Association (LSUA) and Foundation DOTS.

On March 4th Laila Balga participated in the meeting organized by Latvian Large Families Association (chairman of the Board – Imants Keiss) on family-related issues.

On March 9th Laila Balga and Valentina Volodjko (Club „Women for Harmony”) participated in the NGO fellowship and networking event at the NGO House in Riga.

On May 6th Laila Balga and Zigrīda Priedeslaipa (from EAPN-Latvia centre in Balvi) participated in the European Tatar youth association's Tatar and Bashkir festival "Rīga Sabantui".

On May 29th EAPN-Latvia representatives participated in the Latvian Child Welfare Network (LBLT) discussion meeting „Today's children – Latvia's next centenary".

On May 31st EAPN-Latvia experts Laila Balga, Marite Rozentale and Janis Stjadja participated in the discussion meeting organized by the Jekabpils NGO Center (chairperson of the Board – Agita Pleiko) „Opportunities for defending the rights and interests of disability associations in the Vidusdaugavas region".

On September 29th EAPN-Latvia expert Janis Stjadja participated in the LSUA seminar on building better and more effective co-operation with local governments.

On October 27th Laila Balga and Elina Alere-Fogele participated in the discussion meeting „Social inequality in Latvia: challenges and solutions”, organized by the Freedom and Solidarity Fund.

On November 16th the EAPN-Latvia representatives participated in the event introducing Latvian Roma culture “Blueberries and romances”, organized by the Ministry of Culture, LSOST and the Roma platform in Latvia.

On November 29th the EAPN-Latvia representatives participated in the forum meeting “Riga resounds” organized by Riga City Council and the Latvian Civic Alliance.

2) International experience:

On March 17th-18th Norberts Snarskis attended the EUISG meeting in Valladolid, Spain.

On April 5th-8th Laila Balga participated in the EXCO meeting in Cologne, Germany.

On June 15th-17th Laila Balga and Norberts Snarskis participated in the EAPN Political conference „What EU strategy to fight poverty, exclusion & inequality? Learning from the past to Beyond 2020” and in the EXCO and EUISG meetings in Brussels, Belgium.

On October 19th-21st Laila Balga, Lelde Calite and Norberts Snarskis participated in the EAPN meetings and in the General Assembly in Dublin, Ireland.

3) Projects:

Participation in the National Employment Agency projects

Until June 26, 2017 EAPN-Latvia continued to implement the ESF project “Subsidized jobs for the unemployed” on the involvement of the unemployed people from the target groups in the active employment measure “Measure for the certain groups of population”, employing one unemployed person over the age of 55 (Zigrida Priedeslaipa) at the EAPN-Latvia Balvi centre.

From June 26th, 2017 within the framework of the ESF project’s “Subsidized jobs for the disadvantaged unemployed” measure “Measure for the certain groups of population” at the Large Family Centre “Support for the family” in Riga was employed one unemployed person (Kristina Rinasa) and the job supervisor (Elina Alere-Fogele); the employment contract was terminated on July 31, 2017.

From June 1st to August 2nd 2017 EAPN-Latvia implemented the ESF project’s “Youth Guarantee” measure “Development of skills necessary for work in the non-governmental sector”, employing one young unemployed person in Riga (Zane Lupike).

From August 1st, 2017 within the framework of the ESF project’s “Youth Guarantee” measure “Development of skills necessary for work in the non-governmental sector” one young unemployed was employed in Balvi centre (Kristine Miska).

From June 30th, 2017 within the framework of the ESF project’s “Youth Guarantee” measure “Subsidized jobs for the young unemployed (measures for the certain groups of population)” in Riga was employed one young unemployed person (Inna Sumanska) and the job supervisor (Elina Alere-Fogele).

From August 1st, 2017 within the framework of the ESF project’s “Subsidized jobs for the unemployed” active employment measure “Measure for the certain groups of population” in Dobeles, in cooperation with the Dobeles association of people with disabilities, was employed one unemployed person with disability (Rita Sebina) and the job supervisor (Janis Stjadja); the work place was properly equipped.

Participation in the project of the Ministry of Welfare

The participant status in the European Social Fund project „Support for social entrepreneurship” implemented by the Ministry of Welfare (November 2015 - December 31, 2022).

4) Resources:

EAPN-Latvia is a member organization of the LBLT – Latvian Child Welfare Network (represented by Elina Alere-Fogele) and the LSUA – Latvian Social Entrepreneurship Association (represented by Ligita Upite). EAPN-Latvia's cooperation partner is LSOST – Latvian women's non-governmental organizations' cooperation network (co-chair Inete Ielite) and the Dialogue platform (coordinated by the association Shelter “Safe House”).

On November 24th 2017, the EAPN-Latvia Board authorized Laila Balga to work at the EAPN Fundraising and Financial Diversification Team (FFDT) in Brussels.

EAPN-Latvia Strategy platform with 4 working groups was active in 2017. EAPN-Latvia maintained an office (with modern technical equipment and the Internet) and rented a meeting room in the centre of Riga, in the Latvian Free Trade Union building.

In 2017 EAPN-Latvia maintained a website (www.eapn.lv), also provided information on social networks (Facebook and Twitter) and in press publications.

In 2017 EAPN-Latvia prepared 12 monthly newsletters and distributed them in the non-governmental sector. In 2017 the EAPN-Latvia database contained contact addresses of more than 20 foreign partner organizations and more than 400 Latvian NGOs, state institutions, municipalities and companies.

Since August 2017 the EAPN-Latvia foundation's “Reflexion” (LAIKaMETS) 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.

5) Impediments to the activities:

EAPN-Latvia activities are hindered by several factors:

- 1) international funds' financing for social NGO projects is hardly available in Latvia; there is too much competition regarding the call for proposals for the small amount of funding from the Latvian NGO Fund (400 000 Euros);

Latvian Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Welfare refuses to finance the EAPN-Latvia programmes;

- 2) EAPN-Latvia lacks capacity to compete with NGOs from other European countries because of:
 - the volunteer work;
 - the very small number of prepared project applications;
 - the small number of qualified NGO experts;
 - the lack of specialists with foreign language skills;
 - the insufficient capacity in international networking;
 - the lack of lobby to establish a partnership (with co-financing) with state and local government institutions for the preparation of larger-scale international projects;
- 3) the international funds and Latvian state institutions have the view of the Latvian non-governmental sector and the financial availability planning (including for the NGO social programmes) that is short-sighted, hindering the development of civil society and too bureaucratic;
- 4) fund financing was not granted for the following projects prepared by EAPN-Latvia in 2017:

- a) the project application „The First Jugla Residents' Forum", submitted to the Department of Education, Culture and Sport of the Riga City Council on August 2nd (the planned grant: 3780 EUR);
- b) the project application submitted to the EAPN Solidarity Fund on August 17th in partnership with EAPN-Netherlands regarding the capacity building of EAPN-Latvia (the planned grant: 6000 EUR);
- c) the programme on reduction of poverty and social exclusion in Latvia, submitted to the Ministry of Welfare on September 6th (planned funding: 50 000 EUR);
- d) the project application "Programme for the advancement of the advocacy of the poor people's interests", submitted to the Society Integration Foundation on November 21st (the planned grant: 14900 EUR).

Governance and Internal Democracy

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

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 Zilde (a volunteer). The association's finances is managed by accountant Inguna Lapsina (a volunteer), EAPN-Latvia website is administered by Maris Kalejs (the agreement with „Sanne", Ltd.).

In 2017, according to the decisions made by EAPN general meeting and the Board, the following staff worked at EAPN (Europe) structures: a representative to EXCO Laila Balga; a representative to EUISG Norberts Snarskis (until 27 October 2017); MASS trainer Lelde Calite.

Report drawn up in Riga, Latvia, on 17 March 2018

Laila Balga, Chairperson of the Board