Yearly Report 2017
Introduction

Sometimes it is disappointing that you want to participate in something, but you can not do so, because there is no human resource or no financial means for it. That is and remains the problem of an organization that does not have permanent employees, but is dependent on the time that the volunteers have available. If then everything has been given a place in the annual report, you realize that what we have done is really noticeable. And, that is quite a lot, especially if we start from what has is seen as the most importance again, namely that only paid work counts. We also notice this when we participate in something or engage in discussions with paid professionals. There are many who can not / do not want our value and clearly prioritize their own knowledge instead of entering into cooperation, to which we always invite them. Perhaps a strange beginning of an annual report, but it is also a sign on the wall. More and more people are starting a training as experience experts. Those who succeed, then want to get started, preferably as a paid employee. To achieve this, a lot of work will have to be done, as we also showed in our Report and Guide "Participation Building Blocks, knowledge sharing leads to engaged experience experts", which appeared in 2016. Building on this research, the "Participation Building Blocks" workshop will be held three times in 2017. To start with at the ministry nof SA&E, Direction Poverty& Social Policy. Then t the G36 working group Poverty&Debts and at a conference on Social Innovation.

EAPN Netherlands (EAPN NL) stands for two things.
1. Do everything possible to make the voice of the people in poverty and social exclusion heard and give them a face.
2. Wherever possible, the experiential expert (ED) will have their own place.
We did that in 2017 as well. Not always easy, but it is, we think, successful, as the video that we made of the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty 2017 shows.

In 2017 a start was made with the new EMIN (European Minimum Income Network) program, in which we have chosen to let young people speak, as we did during the afore mentioned European Meeting. This is good for the young people, because they can and do participate and contribute their own ideas, but also for our network.

Sometimes the splits we have to make over and over again do hurt. While listening to politicians and policymakers, discussing them, providing them with information and proposals, you must be open at the same time and translate what is happening, planned, expected to the people themselves. Not always easy or fun. Yet we see that as the core of our work. The interpreters of what people move, what they have to deal with, struggle with and try to deal with, as we do with a minima working group, for example, that has created suggestions for improvement for the local minimum policy.

Below we outline in general terms what we were involved in, what we did ourselves, how we brought problems to the attention and how we played our role within the European network.

National Reform Program

As a stakeholder we are invited to respond to the concept of the National Reform Program (NRP). This is an annual report that the government makes to show the European Commission what progress has been made on those issues brought to the attention of the Commission. These so-called country specific recommendations (CSR) from the European Commission can be found in a number of subjects for the Netherlands.
1. the 2020 agenda, or the approach to poverty and social exclusion
2. the mortgage debt that is too high according to the EU
3. the rents, especially for the middle segment
4. reform of the pension system
5. the improvement of the Research and Development Program
6. the development on the labor market.

The NRP is therefore a kind of enumeration for the government of the steps that have been taken in these areas and their consequences.

For us this is a moment to also point out matters that cause poverty and debt, to offer solutions and ideas and to go a step further by putting forward policy proposals. In 2017 EAPN NL is mentioned for the first time in the government report! The research we have carried out in the framework of the project "Use of experience experts within the local social domain" is mentioned as a good example of a new approach. It will come as no surprise that we are quite proud of this very specific mention in such an important report.

Because our response is included, but is not sent as an attachment to the House of Representatives, we send the reaction to the Permanent Parliamentary Committee for Social Affairs and Employment. Furthermore, EAPN Europe is working on a general EAPN response to the 28 NRPs of the member states. A report is compiled which, in addition to the comments made by the national networks, also provides space for what we miss in the NRPs and proposals. This report goes to the European Commission, while we offer it to the Ministry of SZW. It's a huge job, but it's a job that we want to do every year, since we can lobby for improvement for those who live in poverty or/and exclusion.

In 2017, we will point out, among other things, tax avoidance, tackling child poverty, one of the most beautiful and best examples of cooperation between the self-help organizations of benefit recipients, the unemployed, the poor, the disabled, single parents, namely the Dutch Local Minimum Policy. This policy, which everyone now takes for granted, started in 1989 through the cooperation between the Samenwerkingsverband Mensen Zonder Betaald Werk (National Association of Unemployed and Unpaid Workers) and the Kerkrade municipality. A good example of how we “Together look for change (improvement)”.

**The experience experts (ED) (PEP)**

Within the European network, the term for experience experts is People Experiencing Poverty, short PEP. Because we, and we also notice more and more foreign colleagues, feel that this term does not do justice to the groups that are meant by it, we have submitted a resolution at the General Assembly in Dublin, which is based on two things:
1. replace the term PEP with Experienced Experts on Poverty (and Social Exclusion).
2. increase the role of the experience experts (ED) within EAPN as a whole. Something that we constantly pay attention to, but of which we, as EAPN NL, think it can be even better.
The resolution has been adopted and all are working hard to implement it in all areas. As EAPN NL we have, as usual, various meetings with the ED. During these meetings, we ask people what they do at the local or regional level, what they are working on, what they think is important, what they have achieved and especially where their priorities lie at that moment. These meetings can literally be an ED meeting, a workshop, a group meeting at local level or participation in activities. We take the information with us to adjust, renew or expand our own policy where necessary. Because all those who carry out work for EAPN NL were ED or are yet-, the conversion is relatively simple. In this way, our policy is not just always up to date, but it fits also in with the expectations that the ED wishes to formulate. In 2017, it is striking how difficult it is for small, local organizations to stay afloat. Lack of money, support and hearing, and in some cases internal bickering, contribute to the end of organizations. In itself perhaps a natural process, but the people who used its services and activities are back in the cold.

16th European Meeting

As is the case every year, the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty is organized. It is now the 16th. This European conference, organized by EAPN in cooperation with the European Commission, provides a lot of information every year, directly from the experienced poor people themselves. As EAPN NL we choose to let the youth speak for themselves this year. From ‘U 2B Heard !’, a Utrecht based local organization that works with
young homeless people and former young homeless people, two young women are presented.

Third place is taken by a student from the Academy for Film & Sound Hilversum, who works more often as a volunteer for EAPN NL. Together we are working on an idea for a workshop on young homeless people. We decide to have a bracelet made with the text "reach out to homeless youngsters" as a follow up of the action created by the national foundation for Homeless Youngsters. We also use their two video’s, put English translation on it, to show at the conference. The first bracelet is presented to European Commissioner Ms Thyssen during the conference by a former homeless young women from our delegation. The entire conference will of course be given a bracelet, which will also include officials from the European Commission, the Ministry of SZW from Belgium and, what we appreciate very much, from the Ministry of SZW from the Netherlands, present for the fourth year in a row. Our call is not to let young people, children in the street survive, but to help them.

The idea for a workshop is being adapted during the conference, because delegates from Poland, Malta, Finland and Italy also want to talk about homelessness in general with us and each other. The participants in this conference are ED, so the results of our deliberations can sometimes be surprising for 'outsiders'. As our Polish colleague Lydia says she has a job but does not earn enough to be able to afford a home! The rentals in Warsaw have exploded, seen tot the fact of risen numbers of homeless persons, as in many cities. That is why she is a homeless person with a paid job!

Our film student delegate makes of this conference a film impression, which can be seen at http://bit.ly/EEmeeting2017. Here you will also find the two films made by Dutch national tv about the young homeless activity of the foundation Zwerfjongeren Nederland, in which a participant from the foundation U 2B Heard! used to be! And delegate to this conference can be seen. Both reports were shown during the conference and there were many positive reactions.

What we are proud of is that the European Commission has decided, as we know from EAPN, to use our video itself.

The remaining bracelets are distributed over U 2B Heard! and EAPN NL. We offer them to politicians and policy makers when we have a meeting with them, so that the action remains alive and as many decision makers as possible start thinking about the poor position of homeless young people, so that something is done about it.

**Workshop Involving Experienced Experts within the local social domain**

Although the project "Deployment of experience experts within the local social domain" ended in 2016, and the report was sent to all municipalities, it was distributed at a conference of the professional association of Client Managers and is still being distributed via social media. This means that we will continue to work on this important change in the participation process. We are developing a workshop, which will have its debut at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, where the civil servants will be taken along in the ED world. This workshop will then be held at a conference in Ede on experiential expertise and at a meeting of the G32 working group 'Poverty & Debts'. Always with the aim of recruiting the ED in that local process. Because one of us is working as an ED within the GGZ, the other as ED in a local organization and the third of the three persons involved is an ex-ED, working with EAPN NL for many years and now its president, we show them where the shoe pinches and where change is urgently needed.
Participation in the national 'Day of Experiential Experts' is part of the process of collecting information.

We see a future for the ED and we continue to recruit that this future within the local social domain will not only become real, but will also affect all processes and influencing levels.

**Annual conference for inclusive growth (ACIG)**

The Annual Conference Inclusive Growth, which the European Commission organizes every year, is the successor to what used to be the Round Table on Poverty & Social Exclusion. During the conference, a multitude of themes will be discussed that relate to the way in which current poverty can be tackled, new poverty can be prevented and how social inclusion works or can not take shape. As EAPN NL we are part of the government delegation. We take this opportunity to bring themes, such as experiential expertise on the agenda, ensure that ED are present and make use of the opportunity to have input. For us, the European Social Pillar is not just a policy piece of the EU, but the basis for improving the social domain now and in the near future.

**Poverty monitor**

Within the Social Inclusion Group of EAPN Europe, it is decided that each national network will compile an annual poverty monitor. In this way we can gain insight into the social systems, policies and conditions in the EU member states. This process will start in 2017, with not every network delivering a monitor yet. Because we often get questions about our system, especially from colleagues from Central and Eastern Europe, we decide to explain in the monitor how our system works and which arrangements we know. It is therefore not a short overview, but a substantial report, in which we have included all sorts of examples of activities, such as the way we deal with the gender issue. Because even though it seems a lot settled, a lot still has to be arranged!

**European Minimum Income Network (EMIN)**

Since the start of EAPN NL we have been discussing the level of the legal minimum wage and benefits derived therefrom, in particular the social assistance benefit. The Netherlands also has a very extensive system of supplements. That is why people eventually collect a net income, with which, as the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau calls it, is "sufficient, but not enough to participate". So nothing should go wrong, because then as we see ‘Leiden is in trouble’.

The European Minimum Income Network, which we have been participating in since 2014, offers opportunities for a change. The reason this is a difficult subject is that those responsible find that the lowest incomes in our country are above the poverty line. The fact that the surcharges are necessary for this is actually somewhat ignored.
This is problematic, because as a result of this, and due to the consequences of the banking crisis, the lowest incomes have lagged behind in the past decade. This is repaired by additional increase of the surcharges. That way the poverty trap has become bigger.

Those who find paid work, often in a flex job, usually start in a part time situation. Or, as a self-employed person, without employees (zzp-er). The result is that people remain dependent on benefits and allowances. A substantial minimum wage and minimum benefits contribute to a reduction in dependency. This can be achieved by more hours for the flex-worker, fewer consecutive contracts and more better conditions for the freelancer. That there is a need shows the report of the Social and Economic Council (SER) on Child Poverty: "Growing up without poverty".

Through the EMIN process we want to contribute to the discussion about the height of the minimum income in the Netherlands, where we will certainly pay attention to the fact that we celebrate in 2018 that it is 50 years since the statutory minimum wage in our country was introduced (November 28, 1968, cabinet de Jong). This minimum wage is the rack on which the minimum income is arranged.

The work within EMIN also offers a new chance to pick up the general discussion about paid work again. We have been asking questions about how paid work is for years the decisive factor is how our life can and should see.
1. Is paid work central to something now or for the future? Are there other models? What do they look like and what positive and negative consequences do they have?  
2. Is the universal Basic income a solution? Even within the United Nations people discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a universal Basic income.  
3. Should we think in the direction of a Liveable Income, height and conditions?  
4. Are possible mixed forms conceivable?  
5. What are the experiments with a rule-free social assistance experiments, that are starting in different cities?

6. What consequences does the energy transition have on our income?  
7. What if the robotization effectively destroys millions of jobs?  
8. Can we survive with shorter working weeks? What financial consequences does this have?  
9. Is flexible work and zzp really a solution that is future-oriented or more temporary?  
10. If we can not solve poverty now, what will the problem look like in 2030 and how can we use the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) to prevent more poverty in the Netherlands and within the European Union?  
11. The pension discussion is influenced by the individual thinking. When this prevails we will, in 20, 30 years - just like now in Germany and other countries – increasingly see more old age poverty.
As EAPN NL we would like to, together with organizations such as the association Basic Income, the trade unions and others organize political discussions about the future. Discussions where employers are very welcome and that are not meant to change everything quickly, but to think with all of us whether the direction that we are going now is the right one. Can it be different? Should it be different and if so, how and what should be done? As part of EMIN, in 2017 we entered into discussions with organizations, political parties and others. As EMIN we organize at the end of the year, in collaboration with U 2B Heard! and the foundation Zwerfjongeren Nederland a workshop on the minimum income now and in the future, in which, in addition to (former) youngsters and representatives of the two organizations, students social work from the University of SA NHL Stenden Leeuwarden participate. The approach works so well that we get the question whether we want to organize a workshop with students from the Atelier "Entrepreneurship and Social Work" at NHL Stenden. We will do that in 2018.

**G32, working group Poverty & Debts**

In the course of the year Platform 31 (consultancy) makes a Factsheet Poverty on behalf of the working group. This shows, as also from the Factsheet of Divosa (Association of managers of DSS’s), that people at the minimum suffer a substantial amount per month shortage. More than 200 € for a family with children! Child poverty is a second theme, which is often on the agenda next to the protective regime. We participate in one of the three Divosa meetings on this subject. Through the discussions within the working group, with local organizations and a special meeting with experts from experience, our own memorandum on tackling child poverty arises, in which we enter ideas and proposals on how the extra 100 million that the State Secretary makes available for this can be used. What strikes us is the way the municipalities work to allow this extra money to the children. It is a pleasure to see how seriously people take all of this. This applies to poverty, debt as well as the search for solutions that are appropriate.

**Poverty among children**

From this year State Secretary Klijnsma will structurally release 100 million to tackle the poverty among children. As a result, there are discussions everywhere about how these extra funds can best be used. We notice how seriously the municipalities deal with this matter. Divosa organizes three extra meetings, one of which we visit. Learning from each other is the motto. Then we bring together a group of experiential experts to talk to them about this subject. All together, this leads to a memorandum on Poverty among children, whereby EAPN NL always stands by the fact that we do not have financially poor children in our country, but children with financially poor parents. An important difference.
European Social Fund

The EU makes a lot of money available through the European Social Fund (ESF). Member States can apply for parts of those funds for all kinds of projects. Because we, as EAPN, have been in discussions with both the European Parliament and the European Commission about access to this money since the last century, we know that there is a 20% regulation. We were partly involved in this as EAPN. What is striking, however, is that this regulation is not known to the municipalities. Not even in the municipalities in the G32. Strange, since the regulation provides that 20% of spending money from the ESF must be used to prevent poverty, or to tackle it as well to improve social inclusion. We write a letter to the Parliamentary Commission SA&E and ask them to take action here. Although 2017 is over, nothing is known about a possible adjustment or call to users.

Elections 2017

We take the initiative, after the elections, to send a letter to informater Schippers, in which we ask attention for our world, for poverty and social exclusion. We invite many organizations to sign the letter. Although we all realize that our writing will not immediately provide a different policy proposal from either the informer or the negotiating parties, we consider this signal important. The letter will be signed by Resto van Harte, Inclusie Nederland, Herstelgroep Nederland, the organization EcoVrede, foundation Onze DROOM, foundation Ommen Samen Sterk, foundation Samen voor Gezondheid van Vrouwen, WerkPlekPlus, U 2B Heard !, the Older Women Network, the Association Basic Income , the Network Client Councils in Health Care, the Association of Experiential Experts, European Business Learning Certificate, the European Minimum Income Network and EAPN NL. We use the social media as often as possible to make known that we have sent the letter. We receive a notice of receipt from informer Schippers.

EAPN Europe

Within the board of the European network, we work on various policy documents, such as EAPN's vision on the EU's Multiannual financial framework (MFF), which refers to the 2020-2027 budgets. As EAPN, we stand for a better distribution, which means that tackling poverty, social inclusion and increasing livelihood will receive a more adequate share of the budget. Another policy document deals with the future of Europe, with which we interfere in the discussion that is widespread, especially by not conducting it. Everyone seems to have an opinion about what the EU should look like, but often all those opinions can be traced back to two.
1. The populists want to put an end to European cooperation, because this gives them more power.
2. The rest do not know how to respond to this so-called Euro-skepticism and blame everything that citizens, according to one or other survey, do not like at Brussels.
As EAPN we have looked at what the EU means in terms of social society and we work on cooperation and sharing ideas.
**EUISG, European Union Inclusion Strategy Group**

An important policy piece we are contributing to is the Gender & Poverty report that the European Union Social Inclusion Group has made, under the inspiring leadership of our colleagues from Spain and Italy. As EAPN NL, we can draw on earlier policy documents, such as the paper on this subject that the Samenwerkingsverband Mensen Zonder Betaald Werk has made in the previous decade.

A third important document, in which EAPN NL has actively participated in the EAPN EUISG working group on gender and poverty, is the document "Gender and Poverty in Europe".

In addition, a European document on the future of work and employment has been part of the Social Inclusion Group, because the labor market is subject to change as a result of digitization, globalization and robotization. The influence of this on the probability of poverty and social exclusion has been analyzed and Dutch initiatives have been shared with other European countries. This keeps us informed of what is happening in the various European countries and how we can learn from each other.

The working group also takes the lead in what we will call the annual Poverty Report. Because during the discussions in Europe we often notice how difficult it is to compare social systems one-to-one, we decide to extend our Poverty watch 2017 so that our colleagues can see our minimum income system - the statutory minimum wage, the social assistance, the state pension. From the comments we notice that this is appreciated, even though it is quite a job, because the report also needs to be translated into English.

**October 17, World Poverty Day of the United Nations**

This year we are participating in a joint European initiative to ask as many organizations as possible to photograph what they are doing during this day and send them to us. In our own country, we try to organize an action that everyone can participate in. For example, we see participants from the youth organization U 2B Heard !, the foundation our DROOM and others about the "Stepping over the poverty line". We receive photos from different sides, which we mail to Brussels and which are used for a photo collage.
Conferences

We have been invited to participate in Vienna in the concluding conference of the Erasmus + project ROBIN, a project working on Migration and Integration in formal Education. Within this project organizations from Austria, Romania, Spain, Italy and Bulgaria work together. EAPN NL is interesting for our - also - different view on the role of education in combating poverty and exclusion.

The European Commission invites us to take part in the closing conference "Vulnerable, pilot project related to the development of evidence-based strategies to improve the health of people and persons," in order to consider how we can use social inclusion to address health problems.

We take part in the meeting on the Social Development Goals, which takes place in The Hague, and where we are particularly struck by the fact that poverty is something that takes place far from home. Nobody talks about poverty in our own country. It is good that we are there to fill this gap.

We take part in the conference on debt assistance organized by the Budget Advisory Bureau Deventer and the regional Creditbank, which takes place for the second time this year.

Within EAPN context we participate in the conference on the Social Pillar, which EAPN organizes.

All year 2017

It was another busy year, when you list everything up, a lot of work has been done and we have participated in a lot, contributed and made our voices sound. That this is not a normal and natural matter, may be apparent from the fact that we do all this without an own office or a paid staff. And, not unimportantly, without any subsidy. The money for the activities comes from projects, contributions and donations. Thanks to everyone who supports us and of course to all those people who voluntarily take on their part of the work. With them: a strong EAPN NL can do all of this.

Quinta Ansem, president