

# EAPN's Theory of Change

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NOVEMBER 2018

## I. Context

EAPN members engaged in the Theory of Change exercise as part of our 2018 – 2019 strategic thinking process. The need for such an exercise was recommended [Phase 1: Reaching a Shared Understanding](#), and a strong mandate to deliver this exercise was given to the EAPN Director and Bureau.

To inform the process a [PESTLE analysis](#) was undertaken by the staff team, and the results of the [final membership survey](#) were also analysed. A Draft Theory of Change was presented to the Bureau in early September 2018. The paper was updated following these discussions, and the updated paper was debated by the Ex Co in late September, and then during the General Assembly, with representatives of the Ex Co, EUISG and participants in the Capacity Building Workshop. This paper represents the outcome of those discussions, which raised some key questions and challenges, including (but not limited to):

- Is EAPN ‘the anti-poverty movement’ or are we a network enabling this movement?
- Are we currently able to embody the changes we are talking about?
- How will we build public support and pressure?
- How will we ‘land’ these Strategic Changes at the national level?
- Are people experiencing poverty given sufficient importance in our Theory of Change

This report tries to respond to these questions and challenges, and represents a strong basis for Phase 3 of our Strategic Thinking process: Decision Making – Agreeing our Strategic Direction.

Building on this Theory of Change, the staff team will develop a series of priority actions and a timescale for 2019 which will create the foundation of EAPN’s immediate work priorities for the strategic thinking process. This will be discussed with the Bureau in January 2019 and then shared with the membership, via our Members Room, shortly after (Feb 2019).

## II. What do we mean by a Theory of Change?

Theory of Change is a methodology for planning that is commonly used among NGOs. At its simplest a Theory of Change defines the overall change we want and then identifies the major changes which are needed in order to achieve this overall change. Once these major changes are identified, organisational strategies to bring about those major changes can be agreed, and evaluated.

A Theory of Change allows us to be clear and explicit about the changes we believe are necessary to eradicate poverty and social exclusion.

**Our Theory of Change isn’t premised on who we are right now, but who we need to be in order to achieve our Vision.** We are striving to take the most pragmatic steps to strengthen and grow both our network and our impact. The proposed activities that will arise from the Theory of Change map the most significant changes we need to make to how we work in order to achieve our vision.

## III. Enabling an Anti-Poverty Movement

From our analysis and discussions it is clear that to deliver on our Vision, a strong public movement against poverty is essential. EAPN must **enable, nurture and develop** that movement. To do so, we do not need to fundamentally change who we are, but we do need to rebalance the focus of our activities.

## **What do we mean by a ‘strong public movement against poverty’?**

*For EAPN, a ‘movement’ is a large, powerful grouping of individuals and organizations which focus on specific political or social issues - in our case, the eradication of poverty and social exclusion. Movements carry out, resist, or undo a social change. Movements provide a way of social change from the bottom within nations - or regional groupings like the European Union. Movements empower oppressed populations to mount effective challenges to the political status quo, and resist the more powerful and advantaged elites. EAPN is not necessarily the movement itself, but strives to enable, nurture and develop that movement through our network.*

## **What is the difference between our network and the ‘strong public movement against poverty’?**

The question for us as EAPN is whether we **are** that movement or are we enabling it? Our *structure* is a network – and we have agreed on the need to make our structures more effective. However, our *impact* is an anti-poverty moment typified by:

- Vibrant effect public campaigning
- The involvement of large numbers of people
- The direct experience of people living in poverty
- Robust policies informing the campaign, advocacy and communication work

EAPN can, should and will retain its own voice and expertise, but we need to do so in a way that allows others to support our demands, and echo our calls in their own activism and lobbying.

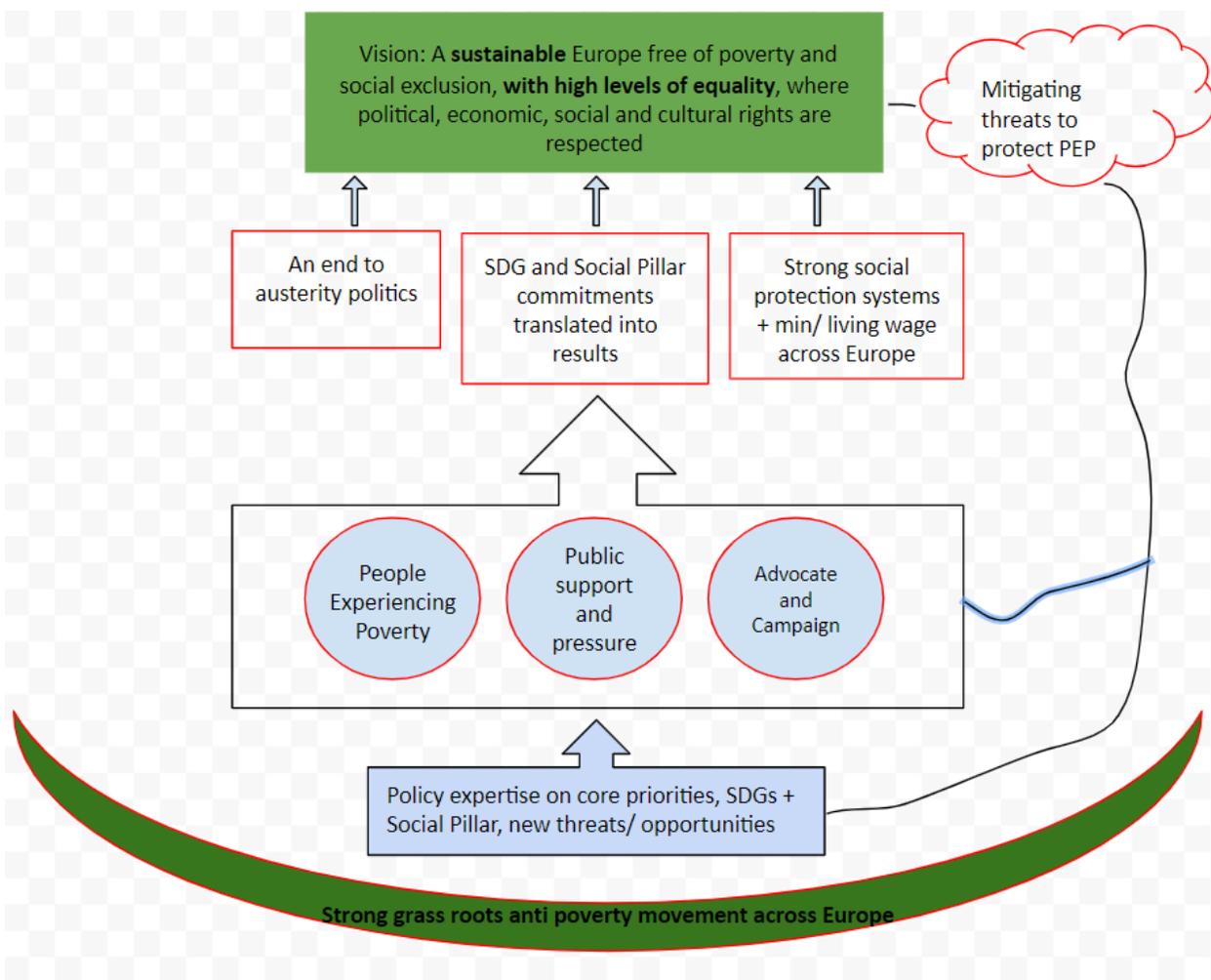
Through the changes we will make during our strategic thinking process, we will have the opportunity to grow as a network, to invigorate new, more effective ways of working nationally and to inspire others to act, and to be part of the anti-poverty movement. We have the opportunity to be more relevant and to take a stronger, more strategic approach to issues like harnessing the human rights framework and working more creatively with young people – the next generation of anti-poverty activists. We have energy, hope and vision - and we have worked hard together to get to this point.

**This strategy will require every one of us, individually and collectively to change how we work together. That change will be challenging, but our future is very bright.**

## **IV. Our Theory of Change**

The **overall change** EAPN wants to see is: “A sustainable Europe free of poverty and social exclusion, with high levels of equality, where political, economic, social and cultural rights are respected”. We collectively mapped the **changes** that are necessary to achieve that vision, identifying seven. These are signified in the graphic by items with a red border (and explained in detail on p3-4). Three of these changes, i.e. **changes in policy, law and politics**, can only be achieved if the other four changes are achieved.

We then collectively mapped where **EAPN could have most impact**, and agreed **four priorities** (see below), all supported by policy expertise in specific key areas - signified by items with a blue body. All of this process is **underpinned** by a strong, grass -roots anti-poverty movement.



## 5. Major Changes needed to achieve our Vision

### **A. Strong, grass-roots anti-poverty movement across Europe (and beyond)**

This means strong members, streamlined governance, more engagement and participation in work spaces, campaigns and political advocacy across our network and beyond. It means a grass-roots anti-poverty movement which really belongs to people experiencing poverty. It means a well-resourced movement, with organisations being able to access EU funds, national funds, philanthropic funds, CSR funds, public donations. This anti-poverty movement has to bring meaningful pressure on governments and corporations at key moments. Structured and meaningful links with anti-poverty movements across the world would help strengthen the European movement.

### **B. People experiencing poverty having space to participate in society, in process around decisions which impact their lives**

Participatory democracy is a key way to make progress on poverty, as people closest to the problems have a strong sense of the potential solutions. People experiencing poverty need to have a meaningful space within existing organizations as well as opening up new spaces.

### ***C. Strong public support for poverty eradication and social inclusion***

While we have some political commitment to poverty eradication, public attitudes to poverty (and excluded groups) are still problematic. When Europeans understand poverty eradication and social inclusion as public goods, as matters of social justice and human rights, then we will be better placed to see real changes.

### ***D. A translation of political commitment into results***

Member States have committed to tackling poverty and social exclusion at a high level, via the SDGs and the Social Pillar. We need to ensure that this commitment is translated into action and results, with meaningful strategies, backed up by funding, to 'land' these frameworks at the national and local level, and with focused attention on income inequalities (as well as social inequalities) and progressive tax systems.

### ***E. An end to austerity politics***

While the high-level political commitments are in place, we are coming out of a decade of austerity following the financial crisis of 2008. To meaningfully tackle poverty and social exclusion in the long term, austerity politics need to end, social spending needs to be prioritized, and resources need to be more fairly distributed throughout society - this means that richest members of our societies, including multinationals, need to pay more tax to ensure that public finances are healthier, and governments are better able to fund social policies.

### ***F. Strong social protection systems (specifically Minimum Income schemes) and appropriate living wages across Europe***

Vital to protect the poorest members of our society. EMIN2 has shown us that Minimum Income schemes vary greatly across European countries and even within countries, and many are too bureaucratic to achieve high levels of take up. The rise of the gig economy provides a real challenge to living wages, which need to be protected and promoted.

### ***G. Mitigation of technological, environmental and demographic changes to protect people experiencing poverty against future shocks***

Policies will be needed to protect poor people against extreme weather events (recent heat wave across Europe) and technological advances (retraining workers in sectors which may be lost in the transition to the non-carbon economy) as well as changes in demographics, including ageing populations and the emergence of new groups of people at high risk of poverty.

## **6. Where could EAPN have the most impact**

EAPN does not need to focus everywhere – this would be neither strategic nor feasible, given our resources. We have analysed where we are best placed to contribute to the change we want to see, recognising our history, our strengths and successes, our weaknesses and failures – and we recognise the key role that both governments and the EU has in creating these changes. There are four priorities, all underpinned by making our network more effective and enabling a strong, grassroots anti-poverty movement.

### **Underpinning activity:**

Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of EAPN as a network, and enable a strong, grassroots anti-poverty movement in all countries across Europe, and links with anti-poverty movements across the world. This will **include internal work on funding, movement building, leadership, cross network communications and participation**, and on building **stronger alliances** with other likeminded organisations and emerging movements.

### **Four Priorities:**

1. **Strengthen links with people experiencing poverty** and ensure that they are meaningfully involved in, and leading, grassroots anti-poverty movements and campaigns around poverty, inequality, precarious work, digitalisation, social protection (with a focus on minimum income), living wages, at national and European levels. Amplify their voices wherever and whenever possible.
2. **Building public support and pressure for the eradication of poverty and an end to neoliberalism austerity politics** by developing challenging frames and narratives, and alternative social and economic political options. We will develop a compelling narrative about the reality of poverty in Europe, increasing our capacity to translate facts, figures and policies into meaningful and accessible stories that inspire action and aid understanding. We will amplify the voice of individuals and groups living in poverty so that their authentic experience are heard, understood and used by the media, policy makers and the public.
3. **Advocate and campaign for social protection systems** (with a focus on minimum income schemes), and living wages throughout Europe, directly towards governments but with an increased focus on the public as well. As part of our advocacy we will continue to push for meaningful civil society space in national and national and European political processes with the most potential impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion.

The content of these three activities come from our other priority:

#### **4. Policy expertise**, which has three strands:

- Pushing for the implementation of political commitments like the Social Pillar and the SDGs, via policy work at the national and European level
- Developing policy expertise on an agreed, limited number of themes likely to include: social and economic rights, living wages, the impacts of precarious work and digitalisation, equal access to high quality social services, the impact of technological and environmental changes on poverty, a 'beyond' SDGs/ Europe specific anti-poverty agenda.
- Working in alliance with others on tax and redistribution, recognising this is not our primary area of expertise