**EU INCLUSION STRATEGIES GROUP**

*14-15 September 2019, Helsinki*

Minutes

Attending: Martina Brandstätter (EAPN AT), Judith Tobac (EAPN BE), Douhomir Minev (EAPN BG), Aleksandra Selak Živković (EAPN HR), Nicolas Yiannakou (EAPN CY), Iva Kuchynkova (EAPN CZ), Malte Moll Wingender (EAPN DK), Mart-Peeter Erss (EAPN EE), Anna Järvinen (EAPN FI), Guy Janvier (EAPN FR), Jürgen Schneider (EAPN DE), Dina Vardaramatou (EAPN GR), Krisztina Jász (EAPN HU), Bergþór Heimir (EAPN IC), Paul Ginnell (EAPN IE), Elīna Ālere-Fogele (EAPN LV), Rimgailė Matulionytė (EAPN LT), Carole Reckinger (EAPN LU), Maja Staleska (EAPN MK), André Bonello (EAPN MT), Sonja Leemkuil (EAPN NL), Olav Strommen (EAPN NO), Ryszard Szarfenberg (EAPN PL), Paula Cruz (EAPN PT), Loredana Giuglea (EAPN RO), Marija Babović (EAPN RS), Anna Szuhová (EAPN SK), Jean Nikolic (EAPN SI), Graciela Malgesini (EAPN ES), Lena Huss (EAPN SE), Katherine Duffy (EAPN UK), Fran McDonnell (IFSW).

EAPN Europe: Sian Jones, Rebecca Lee, Francesca Perulli, Mathias Maucher

Apologies: Philippe Seidel Leroy (AGE Platform Europe), EAPN IT

***Saturday 14 September 2019 (2-5.30)***

*Chair: Graciela Malgesini/EUISG Steering Group*

1. **Introduction**

**Graciela / EAPN ES** greeted participants and new members and proposed a *tour de table* to start the meeting. The Minutes of the June meeting were adopted with the following provision:

**Katherine / EAPN UK** asked to take out the word ‘saving’ from the following phrase on page 4 “Croatia is part of the border, saving the European Union from new migrants”.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** explained that the aim is to move to summative notes rather than verbatim.

Everything in the Action Points was done or is ongoing. The Agenda for the meeting was agreed. She reminded people to send their information for the Contact Book available on the [Members’ Room](https://www.eapn.eu/login/). All other documents referred to in the Minutes can be found in the Members’ Room. The agenda had to be cut from 1,5 days to 1 day, cutting notably a session to start follow up action on gender mainstreaming. Thanks to Graciela and Marija for the group’s newly presented [Terms of Reference](http://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/EAPN-EUISG-Terms-of-Reference-sept2019-3828.docx).

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| **ACTION POINTS*** ***Members who wish to update their Contact Book details or photograph are encouraged to send an email to the Staff Team (******policy@eapn.eu******).***
* ***Members who have not yet established their Members’ Room profile, or have difficulties in doing so, are asked to get in touch with the Staff Team (******rebecca.lee@eapn.eu******).***
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1. **2019 and 2020 EUISG Work Programme**

**Graciela / EAPN ES** updated members on progress on the EUISG Work Programme for 2019.

**Sian / EAPN** **Europe** introduced the final draft of the Application to the Commission – the Work Programme 2020*.* Key changes from this year’s work are:

Activity 1.2: European Semester work will be much the same but will not include a 2020 Semester Report but we will do a review of the whole Europe 2020 Strategy. This will be done by a questionnaire, with a hopefully a consultation budget, so that a member can be involved with the drafting. We will also produce a position paper on adequate income, putting Minimum Income and minimum wages together. The Commission as well as the German Presidency will be looking into an EU framework on living/minimum wages but have dropped Minimum Income, because of lack of commitment from Member States.

Activity 1.3: Post-2020 strategy. We will build an advocacy strategy using our position. The Social Protection Committee did a consultation on how the Europe 2020 strategy has worked but not yet clear if the Commission will do one.

Activity 1.4: Future of Europe. We will engage with the 2-year ‘conference’ although not yet clear what this will be. The EXCO will lead and the EUISG provide ‘policy coherence’.

Activity 1.5: 2-pager publications idea. Wealth-sharing and gender equality will be the topics for next year. We will also work on a just transition/Green New Deal. Many networks are already part of campaigns but little social-proofing so far here.

Activity 2.1: Capacity-Building is done through our toolkit and sessions in our meetings but we will look at how to pass on knowledge better online.

The implementation of the Theory of Change (Strategic Review) is throughout the programme. The EUISG is named for the first time. It was not previously as it is not a statutory group. The aim will be to keep the work programme more reduced so that we have more space for exchange on what’s working on the ground, and also gender mainstreaming. The Ad hoc gender group within the EUISG will prepare and do a joint session with the ExCo to make a participative process to work on this within EAPN.

Energy poverty didn’t come out from members in prioritisation exercises, but it may come in through work on a just transition. EAPN is a co-founding member of the Right2Energy Coalition with EPSU, and Environmental NGOs. Energy transition & affordability is part of the just transition deal. We will also follow the digital & green agendas.

The ExCo is looking into the content of the 30 years anniversary of EAPN. It’s clear there will be no extra event as such, but something will be linked to the GA 2020 (possibly in Germany, linked to the Presidency).

**Guy / EAPN** **FR** has no resources to make an EAPN FR annual report but there are many such poverty reports on-line and a summary could be made.

1. **European Semester**

**Sian / EAPN Europe** updated the group on latest developments with a powerpoint including the last two reports produced by the Group – on the Country-specific Recommendations and the 2019 Semester Survey. The group then exchanged on key messages and advocacy on the Semester and the Annual Growth Survey 2020. The results of the exchanges are summarised below.

*PL, SK, FR, HR, PL, IFSW*

Priority to civil dialogue, and hearing EAPN voices in the preparation also of the AGS. Education is about services – so services are more important important in times of economic growth, but they need to be good quality jobs, particularly with reducing unemployment. Tackling inequality through education is also key – particularly early childhood education and learning.

*LV, PT, UK, BE, IC*

Countries are not preparing for growth but for recession. Don’t make the same mistakes as before the crisis and keep investing in people. Trickle-down theory didn’t deliver. Think about new fiscal measures. Really need the stabilisers: adequate income, minimum wages, pan-european solidarity. The Social Pillar needs to be in the implementation. Invest in people as benefits society.

*HU, CY, NL, DE, IE, EL*

Priorities are already in recent documents. How to address just transition as a poverty issue – poverty-proofing to support People experiencing Poverty is also needed. Civil society & civil dialogue as co-partners and the consequences of not doing that needs monitoring. How to address the issue of growth – degrowth; but GDP-growth as the main priority needs rebalancing. Social economy needs strengthening to be more self-sufficient.

*LI, EE, NO, CZ*

There are concerns over cutbacks to social expenditure and increased conditionality around access to social services & benefits. Particular to the Czech Republic, but all agree, is the need for a European strategy on over-indebtedness. The issue of affordable healthcare and homeless access to doctors. In Estonia there is some progress on pensions raising higher than indexes, with some support from the EU possibly.

*BG, LU, SE, MT*

Sustainability on SDGs should be delivered through the Social Pillar. Environmental & social targets must be linked. And the social must be on an equal level with the economic.

*FI, ES*

EU2020 target far behind in both countries and need to speed up and deliver what committed. Increase towards the target but still at 2008 levels. In Spain, unemployment, plus a lack of jobs for youth and for women are key issues. New job recovery is in precarious jobs. Implement investing in children for once and for all – there are high and growing levels of child poverty. Housing prices are out of control in big cities as a general EU-wide issue causing homelessness and housing exclusion.

**Graciela / EAPN ES/Co-Chair** asked for a show of hands of who has talked to their Semester Officer: FI, ES, FR, PT, BE, LV, AT, PL, LI (scheduled for Oct). Once: FR, AT, SK, PT. Twice: LV, IE. 3 times: ES, PL. Who has *not* invited them: UK, IC, HU. Who was invited to talk with them before the Country Reports came out: PL, ES, FR, MT, SE, DE, NL, IE, FI. Who talked to their national officer about the National Reform Programme: PL, ES, IE, DE, NL, AT, FR, CZ.

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| **ACTION POINTS*** ***EAPN Staff Team will finalize a letter to Juncker with Key Messages on the AGS.***
* ***Members should disseminate the letter to their ministers, Semester Officers etc.***
* ***Members should continue to engage with their Semester Officers, Desk Officers and representatives from national government, by sending them copies of any EAPN publications on the Semester as well as their own contribution. Any inputs from the Poverty Watch work should be sent now as input for the Country Report.***
* ***Please feed back to EUISG members and staff any positive engagement including invitations to be invited to bilateral meetings with the Commission.***
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1. **Policy Update and EAPN Advocacy: Social Pillar, Future of Europe and post 2020**

**Sian / EAPN Europe** updated the group on the latest EU policy developments, with a powerpoint. Here are some additional comments to the slides:

Slide 3 on the context: the Finnish EU presidency have also focussed on the economy of wellbeing. Regarding migration, Turkey is not prepared to be a ‘buffer’ any longer. The context is positive regarding gender balance, with Van der Leyen the first woman to preside the Commission; the 27 Member States committing to it; Christine Lagarde as head of the ECB, with 2 men heading the Council & the Parliament (so 2 women, 2 men). 13 female & 14 male Commissioners for the first time, and 3 Vice-Presidents. The Secretary General of the Parliament is a Croatian woman. Apologies from Greek member Dina for the Greek Commissioner who wishes to protect the ‘European way of life’.

Slide 4 on the Social Pillar: The work-life balance initiative has been rushed through. There is also political agreement for an Access to Social Protection Council Recommendation but some countries are blocking the final agreement. All agreements have been watered down. The Commission is now planning an action plan.

Slide 5 on the Future of Europe: Unclear what 2 years of ‘conference’ means. Likely to be national meetings as before. The new political guidelines will be the driving document, as with the Mission statements for the new Commissioners.

Slide 6 and political guideline 4 on ‘Protecting our European way of life’.

**Bergthor / EAPN IC** Let’s be careful as a new radical party is skyrocketing in Iceland and see what has happened in Denmark.

**Dina / EAPN EL** Frontex are involved with accompanying migrants and diverting people to detention centres therefore no longer only securing borders.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** The only firm agreement at EU level is on giving money to Turkey to stop people coming in.

**Katherine / UK** Why aren’t welfare states in there as the EU’s treasure? Perhaps we could make some statement, not on migration but on the European way of life. Minimum Income & Social Protection are not visible, or just put under jobs.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** We could consider a letter to the new commissioner. The Right of initiative for the Parliament is a very interesting idea.

Slide 7 on social commitments: Focus on the SDGs in the Semester is good and what we asked for. Minimum wage will not be a framework directive under the current treaties – will be up to Member States, but more pressure will be brought to bear. The European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme is a proposal for Prof. Vandenbroecke to be an automatic stabiliser to provide a base system. There is nothing on services/Social Protection, but these commitments are better than the starting guidelines from Juncker.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** cautions that it’s a right-wing party viewpoint, which rings of recession, and there is no word on equality.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** The Pillar being in there and the SDGs used are useful and guarded by Vice-Presidents, but it’s no panacea.

Slide 8 on EAPN’s support to the implementation of the Social Pillar: Sian and Anne Van Lancker were invited to an event organized by the European Commission with the Social Protection Committee on Minimum Income as the only NGO present with no social partners. They are planning to set up a Public Services Network on the theme, supported by the Commission, but the role of EAPN and NGOs in general in this is not clear. Leo (EAPN Director) will be working to develop an EMIN3 project proposal for which the ETUC is on board, but there will be very little money. Many members are working on the child guarantee (14).

**EAPN further action** to support the implementation of the Social Pillar, Future of Europe and action on post 2020 position was then exchanged upon:

**Judith / EAPN BE** BAPN attended an event last week on solidarity and the role of government. It was suggested that FEAD could be an instrument to deliver the Pillar! Anne van Lancker said a framework directive on Minimum Income and not FEAD should be the instrument. Regarding Post-2020: there is a big event planned with the administration and civil society, evaluating Europe2020.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** has had several events through different region raising awareness on the Social Pillar, organized with national government funds and support from the Commission representation office and the Semester Officer.

**André / EAPN MT** They had an invitation from the Commission to discuss priorities in Europe with new MEPs. It was shocking that they are talking about animals/crops/environment, and not about people. He mentioned Minimum Income and 2 MEPs didn’t understand what it was and confused it with minimum wage. EAPN MT had an interview in the Independent/MT paper to elaborate on Minimum Income so gave some exposure.

**Paula / EAPN PT** Portugal will have an event to disseminate the Post2020 paper.

**Rimgaile / EAPN LT** The Lithuanian national audit office did an audit on Minimum Income, starting with their EMIN conference and then asked for and interview and EAPN LT provided information. The research was released in July and 1 of the 1st sentences cited EMIN roadmaps!

**Bergthor / EAPN IC** EAPN IC lost their office so a bit hampered but will try and get an event next year. Would prefer phrasing to be Adequate Income as Minimum Income is very negative.

**Mathias / EAPN Europe** An ETUC paper writes about living wage based on baskets of goods and services (ie reference budgets); strengthening sectoral agreement; the unions argue that it should not be lower than 60% median wage and should not exclude any category of worker.

**André / EAPN MT** Caritas talk about living income. Wage should be 80% of median. Going up to 100%. Need to influence statisticians and decision-makers.

**Sonja / EAPN NL** We had a review of Europe2020. It’s good to follow EU political guidelines but important for us to have our own guidelines. We spend so much time on the problems, but not so much on solutions.

**Malte / EAPN DK** Poverty work in DK didn’t really work as people didn’t care enough, so we changed it to child poverty, and it worked. This could be a positive hook.

**Paul / EAPN IE** EAPN IE received funding to produce a 2-minute video raising awareness on the Social Pillar. There is a working group on access to adequate welfare. A specific campaign on benchmarking of budget is being carried out. Levels should be adequate to raise above the poverty line and adequate basket of goods. Policy seems to be going towards average wages, without benchmarking, so EAPN IE is asking for median line + basket-benchmarking. An article appeared in a national paper and they are holding a media event next week outside the parliament to keep pressure up.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** If the UK leaves without a deal the EU will have a competitor offering lower services. The government was asked under the Freedom of Information Act about what would happen to poverty after Brexit and were told that work has been done, but its classified! Jeremy Corbyn raised the question at Prime Ministers Question Time. The UK is in this situation due to the first-past-the-post system and lacking a constitution, but all the issues are going on in other countries too. This could be raised with Leo & the Bureau for the GA’s political declaration.

**Paul / EAPN IE** The Irish government is bringing a no-deal-UK budget. There is a re-focusing on other areas than poverty, so Brexit does affect other countries.

**The final draft of the EAPN Post 2020 position paper was then signed-off by all the group. EAPN IC initially abstained pending the agreement of the changes outlined below.**

**Fran / IFSW** Money goes to health(care) but not social care. This should be mentioned.

**Bergthor / EAPN IC** Page 9 regarding prioritisation of making work pay: the solutions don’t mention sanctions and hardships and there are a number of countries that have very hard sanctions. It must be clear that we are against this system.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** It is in our positions on employment - “it’s a much better incentive to work if not sanctioned so heavily” - but no concrete recommendations, other than being for integrated Active Inclusion and raising the issue of those who are excluded. ‘Avoiding negative conditionality’ can be added.

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| **ACTION POINTS*** ***The EUISG unanimously adopted the post 2020 strategy position paper, subject to the agreed changes. The document was adopted by the EXCO.***
* ***The Staff Team will now finalize and disseminate and arrange advocacy meetings.***
* ***Members should continue to try to link their national activities/ events to the Social Pillar. Those who have not yet done so, please fill in the google document regarding any national level actions/events carried out/planned for 2019.***
* ***Members are invited to fill in the*** [***Google Docs***](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f0irpFTpe_AchkRNGvSeIoysMwc3uGhifrVULAEI5j4/edit) ***table which maps all national events and activities on the Social Pillar, including a short description and links.***
* ***When the final version of the Post 2020 Position Paper is published, EUISG members should disseminate to their members, governments and European Semester Officers and hold discussions on the key demands.***
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1. **Strategic Thinking Exchange/Feedback**

There was a group feedback on the joint Strategic Thinking session. The group was first asked to indicate who felt concern / upset / excited / disoriented. 20 felt concerned; 3 upset; 1 excited; 1 disoriented.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** It is normal to feel concerned as the EUISG has feared at times about its future.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** People have concerns about different things though. We must have the next version with some changes to be informed, and to discuss it with EXCO members tomorrow morning.

The group was asked if they will have the same position as their ExCo member regardless of their own position: 23 persons answered yes.

**Paul / EAPN IE** It is really important not to lose all the comments made this morning, but it will be difficult to have a new draft to agree on by tomorrow morning.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** We are all afraid about shifting direction; we have to be careful about talking about something which the ExCo is discussing.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** The process wasn’t so clear for people, particularly how the changes will be incorporated. Leo/Eleni and the Bureau sub-group will come up with the new version tonight which will be circulated later and the GA will vote on it tomorrow afternoon.

**Bergthor / EAPN IC** What is the basis for concern? We should not draw conclusions from this feedback because it will create problems tomorrow at the GA.

**Martina / EAPN AT** The problem was communication. It was important to pay attention to the exact wording today, because communication with Exco members is the most important thing. They are deciding about it and EAPN has internal problems with communication. There should be a focus on communication and transparency.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** The 3 EAPN members present in the GA can vote and can all vote differently. Important that you all discuss together.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** The key point is between internal efficiency or being a network owned by People experiencing Poverty (the UK network had difficulties in the past, putting this into practice and resourcing it). Campaigning might mean different things to different people. The detail is still not known after 2 years, so we may agree and think the detail can be worked out later on; or it may be too late. It is hard to agree if it’s not known what is being agreed upon.

**Judith / EAPN BE** Communication with People experiencing Poverty is a dialogue and that is what we need here. The whole process has been problematic.

**Bergthor / EAPN IC** We are supposed to be representative and no way we can discuss this now, so it’s impossible and a point of order.

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| **ACTION POINT*** ***Members are invited to talk to their EXCO members to agree their approach on the Strategic Review and follow up.***
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***Sunday 15 September 2019: 9.30-1.00***

*Chair: Marija Babovich / EAPN RS*

**Marija / EAPN RS** greeted participants and opened the session. Participants welcomed a new member: Jean Nikolič from EAPN Slovenia. The main objectives of the day were:

* To clarify follow up action with new MEPs at national and EU level, including the Campaign on October 17th;
* To feedback on the drafts of the 5 thematic chapters of the position paper discussed in June (EAPN position paper on Education, Training, and Lifelong Learning). To exchange in small parallel groups on the 2nd 5 themes;
* To discuss/agree draft revised proposal on 2-pager on Poverty and clarify overall approach;
* To update on action on the 2019 Poverty Watches;
* To confirm next meeting dates and evaluation.
1. **New European Parliament/October 17th Campaign**

**Sian / EAPN Europe** affirmed that the EAPN European Parliament elections’ campaign was successful. EAPN sent a letter to MEPs to get commitment on follow up to the pledge they signed. Unfortunately, there aren’t enough policy staff to do detailed follow up on all the relevant EP reports, which are anyway only advisory in the social sphere. Thus, the priority now is to get an EP intergroup on poverty and human rights. EAPN is co-organizing an event in the European Parliament on the 16th of October hosted by S+D and EPP, together with ATD 4th World, Emmaus and IFSW, to launch the campaign for the intergroup. Only a few Intergroups can be selected by the European Parliamentary groups, so it’s necessary to campaign for them to support the Intergroup on Poverty.

Some participants shared their experience and talked about the events they organised for the European Parliament elections’ campaign. Then, they discussed about October 17th campaign.

**Aleksandra / EAPN HR** We made a very successful public event before the European elections. We welcomed representatives of 5 parties, and 3 of them have been elected. For the elections of the last Parliament (2014), we didn’t succeed in having them, but after the elections they visited us. The current Prime Minister was MEP at that time, and he came in our office.

**Marija / EAPN RS** announced that Sergio, former President of EAPN, stood for election in Portugal, but just failed to be elected to the European Parliament. He is however working now as a Parliamentary assistant.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** left the floor to Rebecca, who presented the Comm’s proposal for 17th October’s campaign. **Rebecca / EAPN Europe** showed a draft proposal on social media campaign, which participants can find on the [Members’ Room](https://www.eapn.eu/login/), as the one done for the European elections. She affirmed that participants can also take up the work they already did with the Poverty Watches. The best idea is to present some data from their country, and mostly the reality behind the data. The three main actions participants should follow are social media campaign (Elke has a template to use and adapt), one action day, and media work. The objective is to come up with ideas of what Members can do with their network.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** What is the timing? In Spain, we are engaging in our own campaign and we can’t use any resources to do something so general. This moment is key for our Spanish Network because we are issuing an important study on poverty. I would also like to say in public that I don’t like the stereotyped images of people experiencing poverty which are being used. We know that they are mostly women, migrants etc., please reflect on the type of images you are using for the campaign.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** asked Rebecca to explain something about the video that national networks should make for October 17th Campaign, but **Rebecca / EAPN Europe** didn’t know exactly what has to be done for the video. Then, **Graciela / EAPN ES** repeated to be careful with the message. She highlighted that it is fine to underline the exclusion, such as men living in the street, but their situation shouldn’t be stereotyped. **Marija / EAPN RS** proposed to Members of every national network’s policy team to follow up with their communication team and members attending the capacity building.

Discussion about the campaign:

**Judith / EAPN BE** We are only 2 people in EAPN Belgium, but we have strong regional networks who are campaigning. We can’t make videos and we have no direct experience with people experiencing poverty. We don’t even have a Facebook page. We can’t help for the moment.

**Sonja / EAPN NL** We have a project now in Rotterdam. Every day, a man brings bread and something to drink to schools and to children who don’t have lunch. It got a lot of support in the city. However, we can’t make a movie because we can’t film children.

**Anna / EAPN FI** We are supporting the communication in our network, but sometimes our contribution is small because there are not enough resources.

**Anna / EAPN SK** I would like to better understand what the goal and target of our campaign are?

**Katherine / EAPN UK** There are a lot of events in Scotland which are campaigning and I believe that it is better to have national events instead of events coming “from the top”.

**Rebecca / EAPN Europe** explained that the aim is to pool everything which is going on in the EU. The objective is to raise awareness of poverty and, to do so, she invited members to use the same hashtag as the one used for the European Parliament elections’ campaign. It is important to share the knowledge on this issue. **Sian / EAPN Europe** intervened to explain what the Comm’on group is and what it does, as most of the members were not aware of it. She asked EUISG members if they were in touch with the representatives in this group. **Olav / EAPN NO** replied that he is in the group and explained that they are making a short paper with different chapters on communication. It mostly comes in the language they use but, to be better understood, they are supposed to use a language that everybody understands. It’s a sort of “capacity building” addressed to the Network on how to communicate with the media. He was present only at one meeting, they are almost 10-12 in the group.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** explained that the images members use for the campaign have to confirm what their study says. It is crucial to target the study, develop a targeted campaign and debates about the proper forms to reach the different audiences. This also means using different language. There is the need for the Communication team/group to work with the policy group as a whole and she affirmed that if Comms staff can’t be present at the EU ISG group meetings, they can follow up the developments by reading what the Steering Group publishes, or joining them at the Steering Group.

**Marjia / EAPN RS** In my organisation, no communication goes out if the policy staff doesn’t approve what is going to be published. The communication should be checked, advised, by the representative of the policy group.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** asked participants if they all agree about giving some advice/contribution on communication. Participants all agreed. **Olav / EAPN NO** suggested to put this point on the agenda for the next meeting. **Sian / EAPN Europe** finally affirmed that it is important to put forward key messages, key recommendations and good practices, which the EAPN Staff Team will then put together to publish a report.

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| **ACTION POINTS*** ***EUISG members should discuss with EXCO/ other members how to support the EU EAPN campaign for October 17th linked to their own activities/events. It’s useful to use the Poverty Watch/ support the video and social media campaign.***
* ***Members should discuss advising/ensuring policy coherence with communication work with own networks. We will discuss next meeting.***
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1. **EAPN position paper on Education, Training, and Lifelong Learning**

**Sian / EAPN Europe** updated members on the state of play regarding the position paper. Amana drafted the first 5 fiches based on the discussions in June. Today members were invited to discuss the final 5 themes. Mathias (the new policy officer) would be responsible for revising and finalizing the position with members.

**Feedback on the 1st 5 fiches.**

There was some concern with the shortness of the document leading to oversimplification and the overall structuring and priorities.

**Judith / EAPN BE** Education is not uniform in Belgium, there are 2 types of education systems, corresponding to Belgium and Flanders. I need to make this difference. It is also a difficult issue to make a paper on Education if it’s a European paper, because we know that, in the European Union, education systems are very different. It is hard to find the right balance. It needs to be more nuanced.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** There is a big gap across Europe in terms of education levels and systems. However, the group had a detailed discussion on the objectives and format, and made a decision, so it is not really possible to revisit this. It may be possible to avoid going into details, but to underline the existing big gap in education and life-long learning between and within countries.

**Paul / EAPN IE** It is too simplistic, we should add in the EU context with data and process at the beginning. I agree to try to keep it short, generalizing in the introduction part is not always good. We have to make sure that we don’t say that something is happening everywhere if it’s not true. Stronger focus on inclusive education is needed. We should talk about promising rather than good practices.

**Anna / EAPN FI** All these papers reflect the situation in Finland. But the reality is different in other European countries. There needs to be a stronger message on universalism

**Fran / IFSW Europe** asked if it is possible to add a context section in the paper. **Sian / EAPN Europe** replied that the scoping note specifies that there will be an introduction and context setting at the beginning, which Mathias will develop as a draft.

**Sonja / EAPN NL** Section C.1 doesn’t reflect the reality in the Netherlands. We also need to highlight the bad practices.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** Good practices are limited to some countries most of the time. In the policy recommendation, section C.4, there is a line I’d like to take out. No rich children in poor families, we need to reverse the quote.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** We agreed to add in the document examples from real life. We need examples, testimonials, but also good and bad practices. It would be useful if members could provide this.

**Malte / EAPN DK** highlighted that, in his opinion, the five fiches should have underlined the overarching idea of inclusive education. **Sian / EAPN Europe** agreed with him and confirmed that inclusive universal education should be the overarching theme/priority – with the rest as sub-themes.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** highlighted that she had sent 18 pages of input to Amana but did not see this reflected.

Participants were asked to split into five Working Groups for the remaining 5 thematic fiches, according to their interests and expertise:

**6) *Training and upskilling for the labour market (for the unemployed as well as on the job);***

***7) Young people, including NEETs and early school leaving***

***8) Digital divide, online learning, access to technology, digital skills***

***9) Specific barriers in accessing education, training and lifelong learning for key categories (Roma, migrants, etc.)***

***10) Specific barriers in accessing education, training and lifelong learning for people with a disability or health issue.***

The results of the exchanges in the Working Groups are summarised below.

**1. Training and upskilling for the labour market (for the unemployed as well as on the job)**

*PT, FR, SK, SI, LV, SL*

For almost every country in this Working Group, training is a pre-condition to receive benefits for active labour markets (Job seekers allowance etc) but there are a lot of problems: poor quality, waiting time, the courses are not relevant and doesn’t enable them to acquire the skills needed for the labour market. In Latvia, private companies provide the training, thus the government choses the lowest bid. However, the quality is really bad. In Portugal, the training is given by the National Institute, which has a bad name so the certificate is not really useful. In some countries, unemployment rate is quite low, such as in Slovakia and Slovenia, but the problem is that unemployed people are low-skilled and it is difficult to upskill them and the jobs offered are poor quality. A lot of funding goes to training but it’s not good quality. The system, as it is today, wastes funding and resources. In France, the training goes to people who are already employed, so this is a wrong target. They also talked about *Territoire zéro chomeurs*, which is a new project, according to which everybody receives a good job with a salary and has a work experience. The European Commission is already preparing programmes for education and strategies for every country. The group invited the other members to look at this and see how they can integrate this aspect in the paper.

**2. Young people, including NEETs and early school leaving**

*MT, NO, CZ, EE, DE, RO, AT*

School leavers are high in the EU and the phenomenon of brain-drain is widespread. School and education systems are failing the students. André from EAPN Malta gave an example: he said that he is here today because he left school at 14 years old, everybody told him that he was stupid. Then he decided to start studying at University and continued regardless of what the others said. Students feel today the pressure to study. Iva from EAPN Czech Republic affirmed that, in her country, students who leave school are usually those who start using alcohol and drugs. Their proposed policy recommendation was: to ensure that education is more attractice to young people and tailored to students needs eg home economics/how to survive/to learn/ to be resistant. the entitlement of education for sustainable development is implemented comprehensively from the early years to nurture the right skills, to become responsible citizens who make informed decisions and take actions to promote and safeguard personal’, family’ and community’s well-being.

**3. Digital divide, online learning, access to technology, digital skills**

*DK, LT, FI, UK, CY, MK, LU*

They highlighted that, clearly, there is unequal access to internet and computers; some families don’t even have access to electricity so access to energy is a pre-requisite. Concerning digital skills, they are required in most jobs and in schools and they are crucial also for information-seeking. They call for equal education in digital skills in schools and better skill training for the unemployed. They tried to think about the consequences of this unequal access in terms of opportunities, but they didn’t come up with specific answers- what are the implications for the whole family/household of having ipads/phones.. Of course, they believe that there are some negative consequences with pushing digitalisation too fast. They didn’t come up with resolutions, but they raised a dilemma: should we push for more digitalization or go slow to give the opportunity to all? Everybody should have the right to access internet and the computer, and these should also be public facilities ie in schools.

Some interventions:

**Graciela / EAPN ES** I am checking Eurostat statistics and I see that 87% have access to digital devices. So, who is your target? It is no more a question of equal access. Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Greece have less (70%), but access to computers isn’t the only barrier. However, the 13% will be the poorest..

**Katherine / EAPN UK** We also added the basket of goods and services for an adequate income has to be reworked to give access to anyone.

**Krisztina / EAPN HU** Today, Roma are using it to strengthen the prejudices against them, as they show their living conditions and do not understand the risks.

**Marija / EAPN RS** It’s strange to see that Roma children don’t have electricity, but they have smartphones. A small survey in a Roma community show that children don’t have electricity, sewers but have smart phones.

**Dina / EAPN GR** We should understand that smartphones are the only way we have today to communicate. Xenophobic people use the argument of mobile phones to say that migrants are not poor. But we have to understand that it is the only way to have connections with the outside world.

**4. Specific barriers in accessing education, training and lifelong learning for key categories (Roma, migrants, etc)**

*HU, BU, GR, HR, IE*

They specified that what they discussed is not applicable to every country. One of the barriers is the different terminology regarding key categories (Roma, Migrants, etc.). They discussed about the policy regarding education. There is a lack of transparent strategies for inclusion and educational activities overall. The segregation process is getting stronger, particularly for Roma, unaccompanied minors who face multiple barriers: discrimination, lack of access and inclusion. The situation is different across Europe. We have to make sure that we ensure that inclusion is added as a legal requirement to our legislation system. Ireland is part of a campaign about this at national level.

**5. Specific barriers in accessing education, training and lifelong learning for people with a disability or health issues**

*NL, PO, SW, IFSW, GE, BE*

They underlined that we should understand how important some barriers are for people with disability and health issues. The problem is that often human rights-based approaches are not related to disabilities and remain often disregarded. These should be about empowerment, participation and non-discrimination. European Disability strategies developed for next year will look at some of the issues and problems of funding and access. Poverty is often a consequence of disability, but they have extra barriers. A child/person-centred approach is needed to lifelong learning. They talked a lot about the debate around inclusive schooling for children *vs* segregated schooling. They felt that inclusive schooling must be the way forward, but it requires additional support from the health care system, social workers, psychologists. Funding is the most crucial issue as it has recently been cut radically. In the Netherlands, for example, a 9-year old are waiting to be assessed. In the UK, it can take a year and they are often excluded from schools. This huge disadvantage is then reflected into adulthood, life-long learning, training, jobs and access. This is also linked to the issue of digital devices. It would be a great resource for people with disabilities but it is again an issue of funding.

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| **ACTION POINTS*** ***The Staff Team will draft the final position paper and send to members for comments in November.***
* ***Members should send comments on the first 5 fiches or the new one’s this should include comments, additions, testimonies and promising or negative examples to Mathias (****Mathias.Maucher@eapn.eu****) who will send a specific mail.***
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1. **Two-pager on Poverty**

*Chair: Martina / EAPN AT*

**Martina / EAPN AT** presented the focus of the session: the revised final draft of the two-pager on Poverty, which Katherine has been working on. She thanked Katherine for her effort and all the participants for the great job.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** underlined that the group had decided to move away from the original idea of a short summary document/2 pager, during the previous EUISG meetings. It is clear that the group wants a longer, but succinct ‘explainer’, which Katherine has developed. This has been discussed with Leo and the Bureau and it’s been agreed that the 10 sider will be adopted, then the policy team will draft a 2 page summary with a quick link to the longer document. The Communication Team will then finalize the 2 pager. She will send this draft to EUISG members.

**Katherine /EAPN UK** thanked everyone for the contribution. She highlighted that, in the migration agenda, there are some differences and, according to her, it is crucial to reconfirm what they all believe as a group, thus she would like more comments on it. **Martina / EAPN AT** proposed to discuss what they want specifically in the two-pager during the session and **Sian / EAPN Europe** affirmed that more comments would be useful.

Participants didn’t have any comments on the two-pager on Poverty.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** then presented the next two-pagers which will be issued afterwards: a two-pager on gender (it will be issued next year) and another one on education. They also decided on a two-pager on minimum income and social protection. Sian/EAPN Europe will draft a 2 pager on minimum income and social protection, based on the EMIN road map. Next year, there will be also a two-pager on wealth, which will be discussed in the Executive Committee, and another one on gender.

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| **ACTION POINTS*** ***Sian will work with Katherine to finalise the longer paper, including EAPN documents references. Any other urgent points should be sent before the 20 October to to*** *Sian.Jones@eapn.eu*
* ***Sian will draft an initial 2 pager summary and circulate it to members for comments before forwarding to the Comms Team.***
* ***The 2 pager on MI will be drafted and circulated before the end of the year***
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1. **Poverty Watch update**

**Sian / EAPN Europe** asked to members:

Who has already done the PW? *Croatia, Portugal, Finland, Spain*.

Who is planning to do the PW for October 17th? *Norway, Lithuania Netherlands, Latvia, Poland*.

Anyone else who is planning to do it this year? *Romania, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovakia*.

Discussion about the Poverty Watches

**Carole / EAPN LU** We might do one, but it depends on our human resources and time.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** explained in detail the Poverty Watch to those who were new. There is a scoping note agreed by the group which acts as a guide, but not obligatory to follow. Members should try to do something which is useful for them at the national level and then do a translation into English for us by EAPN Europe. They should use their own language because it is something they will address to their national governments and then EAPN Europe Staff will feed it into the European process. It is crucial to do the Poverty Watch during this period, because the European Commission is now preparing the Country Reports which are the basis for the CSRs. So, those who have already prepared it should send it directly to their desk officer, semester officer, as well as to their national government. EAPN Staff Team will then use it to influence at the European level as well. At the next meeting, there will be a discussion about the 2019 EAPN Poverty Watches, the EAPN Staff Team will prepare a report to summarise them and there will also be an event around them.

**Iva / EAPN CZ** We are planning a meeting in November to present our Poverty Watch.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** I want to say something to Carole to explain how to do the Poverty Watch in Luxembourg. Robert has prepared a summary following the Caritas Report, which Caritas presents to the Luxembourg government. Regarding EAPN Spain, we are doing the 9th report on Poverty where we present data and micro-data from the EU SILC: survey of living conditions. We reanalyse everything and we do our own report from the data of the national statistics. This is our key report. We are preparing this Poverty Watch in English, because it is difficult to find information which is not in Spanish.

**Guy / EAPN FR** We haven’t done the Poverty Watch in 2019, and we are not planning to do it. We did it last year, but I think that there are no evolutions in only one year. It’s a big work for us and it’s not worth doing it.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** We understand it that people were reluctant for the reasons you mentioned. That is why the original idea was to do it bi-annually. It’s not just about the EU data, as the Commission already knows this information. You should also focus on your priority issues, drawn from your work with People experiencing poverty. It doesn’t have to be exhaustive and comprehensive. It is important to use concrete examples, to see what is working or not working with the national policies.

**Judith / EAPN BE** We are in the same case as France, we have limited resources. But I think that even if you have limited resources, you can do it anyway because there are some good reports and you can take information from those. I don’t know what I can do this year, but we will do a consultation with people experiencing poverty, we will talk about green transition, ageing, digitalization but we will put into also issues such as austerity.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** How you do it is your choice. It should useful for you and for the Commission and inspiring for us.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** I want to bring another perspective. As members of this group, we should deliver. We have committed to follow the action points which we agree on in each session. You are engaged in delivering something, not necessarily in doing the Poverty Watch every year. If you don’t deliver the action points, you end up compromising the work of the group.

**Francesca / EAPN Europe** I know that Italy is doing the Poverty Watch too, they are carrying out interviews on the ground with people experiencing poverty. One person from EAPN Italy told it to me.

**Paula / EAPN PT** We have prepared the Poverty Watch last week. We will have a big event on Friday with political parties, as we will have the elections in October. The report we have prepared is different from the one we prepared in 2017, we used national and European data. This report is smaller, it has recommendations and voices of people experiencing poverty. We focused on two issues: minimum income and housing. We will translate it in the next two weeks.

**Jean / EAPN S**I stated that “Poverty Watch” is a huge subject for him and he asked for clarifications about how he can do it, what is expected from him and which data he has to use. **Sian / EAPN Europe** replied that there is an explaining document for the Poverty Watch. The general idea is to use the data and go beyond them. The priority is to do it for Members’ own use, so they should prepare it in their mother tongue because it will be addressed to the general public and national politicians. Members should send it to the EAPN Staff Team in their language, coupled with a summary in English.

**Bergþór / EAPN IS** We are planning to do the Poverty Watch for us. I will push to get it done for this autumn. I will try but it’s not a promise.

**Fran / ISWF** How can we contribute to this, as a European organisation? How can we collect information and data? We don’t have funding or infrastructures properly. But people are willing to do projects and maybe there are some available resources.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** AGE did the Poverty Watch on older people, and it was really useful. To do it, you can use the contract money. National networks can use that money but I’m not sure if European organisations can too.

**Katherine / EAPN UK** Can you clarify this Sian? I thought that the contract money was not available anymore. I was told not to do the Poverty Watch because there were no resources available.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** In the contract there is an explicit section. There is some money to do it, but it doesn’t cover the whole cost.

**Judith / EAPN BE** Maybe for the next year, we have to clarify which are the documents we have to perform on in this group. We have to know this information because normally an administrative person signs the documents.

**Martina / EAPN AT** You have to understand the structure of your network. I also don’t know who signs the documents.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** It is also important to make the link with EU funds ie the enabling conditions for structural funds/ESF require that MS have anti-poverty strategies in place. The strategy is important because it is the basis to claim funding.

**Ryszard / EAPN PO** – Our governments are obliged to have this strategy and to consult NGOs for having inputs (the Poverty Watch is a very useful input). You should also be in touch with European social policy experts: they published synthesis report about homelessness in Europe and every country has the report. They could help you with the Poverty Watch and with every other aspect. They know what the Commission wants from every expert in the poverty area. I am one of these experts.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** Robert was a national expert, Anna from Slovakia used to be a national expert. We have contact with them and you all should be in contact with those people.

**Judith / EAPN BE** I am confused. I would like to have more information on the strategy, about the structural funding.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** Every Member State has had to develop a document setting out its anti-poverty strategy which is necessary as a basis to get funding. Don’t worry about this, I will send you information. A separate issue is about the European Social Policy Network (ESPN). These are Independent social policy Experts financed by the Commission. They have one expert for each country and they produce reports on many issues to be addressed to the Commission. You should get the contact of the Independent Expert from your country.

**Mathias / EAPN Europe** Some colleagues told me that in Germany the situation is good, there are some reports already out. I just wanted to support the idea already expressed by some, that some countries already produce a lot of reports and have to change the strategy to write EAPN Poverty Watch.

**Jürgen / EAPN DE** In Germany, we have a group of people experiencing poverty and we work with them.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** The Poverty Watch has to suit you, you have to be comfortable with it. It is not about the information that others publish, or the statistics that the government publishes. It is important to say what you have done, whom you have speak with, the critics of a politician etc.

**Judith / EAPN BE** We have limited resources but we are trying to do it focusing on small issues, such as indebtedness.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** If you need to have the statistics from your country but you don’t have the resources to get them, we can help you with it. The thematic focus is very important, and you have to decide what is useful to do for your own country. We agreed that would try to pick up minimum income so, if you have information or latest developments on minimum income (positive/negative) in your country, please send it to us.

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| **ACTION POINTS** * ***Staff will send the Poverty Watches to the Commission before the end of October.***
* ***Members should send their 2019 Poverty Watch to the EAPN Staff team (******sian.jones@eapn.eu******) as soon as they finalise it, including a box/Info on latest developments on Minimum Income preferably by mid October. These will be sent to the Commission.***
* ***Members should also send it to key contacts in National Government, the European Semester Officers, The EU Desk Officers and ESPN.***
* ***Members should get into contact with their European Social Policy Network (ESPN) experts regarding their reports and feeding in information.***
* ***A separate mail will be sent by EAPN Staff.***
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1. **Closing session**

**Martina / EAPN AT** asked who wants to host the next EUISG meeting in March. Sian/EAPN Europe stated that she hopes they will continue to meet three times a year. At the moment, she has proposed having two full days of the EUISG around the 19-20th of March, preceeded by a ½ day event hosted by the host network. This could be a seminar, mutual learning exchange, study visit around a relevant theme. She explained that they only get 80% funding from the Commission, so there is the need to co-finance and get money from the national level. The Steering Group shared information on organizing the EUISG with co-financing.

**Marija / EAPN RS** In Serbia, we organized a capacity building session with the UN related to gender and poverty and we could cover the majority of the expenses for accommodation and things like that.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** The general idea is that you organise something, it could be a conference for instance, and you receive an external funding.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** In Spain, we chose a topic like child poverty, and we prepared a European seminar. It should be a hook for every government. The funding doesn’t need to be cash, they can provide accommodation, meals, or different things not necessarily the money. You have to think about something that could appeal to your local government. If they are debating environmental issues, you may propose an event on poverty and the environment or sustainability. It does not have to be in big cities, but also in smaller ones. We did it in Valladolid, Palma de Mallorca, for example.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** It is important to underline that you do not have to cover all the costs.

**Rebecca / EAPN Europe** The best thing to do is just to contact me and I can give you a basic budget because it is different for every country. So just think if it could be possible and get in touch with me.

**Graciela / EAPN ES** Approximately it is just 5 or 6 thousand euros, it’s not impossible to get this money.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** You have quite a lot of flexibility, if you have some ideas you can come back to us at the early stage and we can make the decision. Just think also about your culture and the different ways of engaging in this process. The one in Ireland was great, in Germany it was about migration. Think creatively.

**André / EAPN MT** It would be interesting for us to organize it in Malta, but we are struggling with funds, we only have voluntary workers. The only source of funding we have comes from conferences. To organize it in March shouldn’t be a problem, because during that period we will be launching a minimum income report, which is very strong in Malta.

**Paula / EAPN PT** I see internally if we can do it. If yes, it will be in Porto.

**Aleksandra / EAPN HR** We cannot organise the EUISG but what we can do is something similar, particularly because the Vice-President of the Commission used to be Mayor of Dubrovnik, and maybe we can organise something in October. When I come back, I will have a look.

**Sian / EAPN Europe** I think that they are thinking about organising the ExCo in Germany, to be in line with the German Presidency. Please discuss internally and let us know as soon as you can, I’ll share it with the Steering Group and we will decide together.

**Marija / EAPN RS** reported back from the presentation to the Executive Committee to get the signature to approve the Post-2020 Paper. It was approved unanimously.

Participants did tour de table for an oral evaluation about the meeting.

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| **ACTION POINTS*** ***Members should see internally if they can host the next EUISG meeting in March. For those who are interested, please send an email to the EAPN Staff Team (******sian.jones@eapn.eu*** ***and*** ***rebecca.lee@eapn.eu******) and you will then receive relevant information on the organisation of the event, and on basic budget.***
* ***Members are invited to fill out the Evaluation Form and return it by email to the EAPN Staff Team (******rebecca.lee@eapn.eu******).***
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