



Association “EAPN-Latvia”

NATIONAL REPORT 2015

Influencing National Governments for Better Policies: Advocacy, Lobbying and Policy-Making Linked to European Level Developments

1) Cooperation with government authorities and municipalities in Latvia:

In 2015 EAPN-Latvia continued to cooperate with the Ministry of Welfare of Latvia (the Association had its representatives at the Committee of Social Inclusion Policy Coordination, Committee of Gender Equality, the National Board of Disabled People, and the Operational Programme of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived); with the Ministry of Interior of Latvia (EAPN-Latvia had a representative at the NGO Consulting Board); with the Riga City Council; and the Secretariat of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Since February 25, 2015 EAPN-Latvia has been a member of the Cooperation Memorandum of Latvian NGOs and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia.

2) Measures taken to implement EU policies in Latvia:

On March 4–6 representatives from 14 member organizations of EAPN-Latvia visited the European Parliament in Brussels and met Latvian MEP Inese Vaidere; the event was organized by Head of EP Information Office Māris Graudiņš and Visits and Seminars Unit of DG Communication. <http://www.eapn.lv/arvalstis/#european>

On October 28 at the café “Vanaga ligzda” in Riga, as part of the events dedicated to Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester, EAPN-Latvia organized a discussion meeting and hosted presentations on Europe 2020 Strategy by experts Laila Balga, Aivars Lasmanis, Norberts Snarskis, and leaders of NGOs, with participation of Raija Hiivala and Marjatta Morin – NGO experts from Swedish-Finnish Folk High School (SVEFI) with the aim to familiarize the civil society with the workings of Europe 2020 Strategy and tools that help evaluate and act on social issues. Coordinator – Lelde Cālīte. (See attached Report.) <http://www.eapn.lv/latvija/#socialo>

In December EAPN-Latvia assembled and translated part of EAPN materials and documents from English into Latvian and made the layout of a handbook/brochure “Runājam un rīkojamies” (“Let us act”) (see attached).

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

Since July 10, 2014 Laila Balga has been working as a member of the Monitoring Committee of the Planning period 2014–2020 of the European Structural and Investment Funds and the Cohesion Fund, the Subcommittee of Employment, Workforce Mobility and Social Inclusion.

4) Advocacy and lobbying:

On January 5 Laila Balga and Lelde Cālīte visited the Latvian Parliament party’s “No sirds Latvijai” (Wholeheartedly for Latvia) leader Inguna Sudraba and senior consultant Dace Nulle at *Saeima* – the Parliament of Latvia – to talk about minimum income schemes in Latvia and the EAPN-Latvia National Report to the European Commission.

On March 9 EAPN-Latvia, the NGO Collaboration Network of Latvian Women, and Women’s Rights Institute organized a discussion titled “Latvian Women United for the Future” and its 60 members from 36 NGOs adopted a Resolution for submission to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Parliament and the mass media of Latvia.

On April 15 Laila Balga took part in a meeting of the Committee of European Affairs of the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia whose agenda included discussing the implementation of Latvia’s Stability Programme for 2014–2017 and the National Reform Programme of Latvia Progress Report regarding Europe 2020 and the Semester.

On June 5 NN member organization “Riga Active Seniors’ Alliance” (chairperson Terēzija Mackare), together with other seniors’ organizations, visited Prime Minister of Latvia Laimdota Straujuma to inform about the social issues facing seniors of Latvia.

In June NN member organization "Latvian Pensioners' Federation" (chairperson Andris Siliņš, MP of Latvia) announced a signing campaign on redistribution of state budget financing and on raising pensions and reignited the discussion about pensions at the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia.

On June 8 EAPN-Latvia, in cooperation with Consultation Council on Environment, Latvian Rural Forum, Association for Public and Private Partnership, and Civic Alliance – Latvia, drafted and submitted recommendations to the Ministry of Finance of Republic of Latvia "On strengthening the capacity of NGOs to achieve the specific objectives of the operational programme "Growth and Employment" priority axe "Technical assistance" of the 2014 – 2020 planning period of EU funds".

On June 27 EAPN-Latvia submitted recommendations to the Ministry of Welfare of Latvia regarding a guaranteed minimum income adequate to Europe 2020 Strategy.

On December 1 Board of EAPN-Latvia submitted its position to the State Chancery and Ministry of Finance of Latvia regarding the amendments to the Associations and Foundations Law concerning economic activity, which were proposed by the State Revenue Service of Latvia.

On December 3 Board of EAPN-Latvia submitted its position to the working group of the Civic Alliance – Latvia regarding strengthening the capacity of NGOs in the process of monitoring the use of the European structural and investment funds.

On December 5 Board of EAPN-Latvia submitted its position to the Ministry of Finance of Latvia regarding improvement of cooperation in the decision-making process.

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

From September 1 to December 31 EAPN-Latvia organized the events of the PeP programme "People Experiencing Poverty Speak for Themselves" in the city of Riga and the municipalities of Varakļāni and Rucava in Latvia. <http://www.eapn.lv/latvija/#socialo>

During the programme EAPN-Latvia hosted eight events and gathered together over 200 people. An enlarged EAPN-Latvia board meeting was planned for January 2016; schedule of the meeting – evaluation of the results of the PeP activities of 2015, recommendations for the future.

On February 20–21, PeP National Coordinator Edīte Kalniņa took part in the meeting of PeP National Coordinators organized by EAPN in Vienna, Austria.

On September 25 at the Rucava Town Hall, a meeting and debate took place between people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and experts representing the local authorities of the Rucava municipality and the State Employment Agency of Latvia. Survey of participants was conducted. Coordinator – Valda Stadgale.

On September 25 at the local Varakļāni Help Center for People Experiencing Poverty, a meeting and debate took place between people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and experts representing government institutions and the local authorities of the Varakļāni municipality. Survey of participants was conducted. Coordinator – Staņislava Poče.

On October 6 a dinner for 19 people experiencing poverty and social exclusion took place at the restaurant "Apsšeron" in the city of Riga. Edīte Kalniņa and Laila Balga helped the participants to prepare for a visit and a session at the Committee of Social and Employment Affairs of the Parliament of Latvia. Coordinator – Lelde Cālīte.

On October 7 a meeting between a delegation of 13 people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and the MPs of the Parliament of Latvia took place at the Committee of Social and Employment Affairs of the Parliament of Latvia in the city of Riga. Edīte Kalniņa led the delegation. A photographer and a representative from the media were present.

On October 23 Board of EAPN-Latvia confirmed four Latvian delegates to the 2015 European Meeting of PeP in Brussels. Until November 18, members of the Latvian delegation were trained for participation in the meeting "Social Convergence in the EU"; among other things, a representational poster was designed. Coordinators – Edīte Kalniņa and Laila Balga.

On October 28 a meeting between people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and experts representing EAPN and leaders of NGOs took place at a café "Vanaga ligzda" in the city of Riga. Chaired by Laila Balga, the meeting hosted presentations on Europe 2020 by experts Aivars Lasmanis and Norberts Snarskis. 40 members of

20 NGOs from Latvia attended the meeting, along with experts Raija Hiivala and Marjatta Morin representing SVEFI – Swedish-Finnish Folk High School. Coordinator – Lelde Cālīte.

On November 12 the National Meeting of PeP of 37 people from 30 NGOs and six municipality social services took place at the House of the European Union in Riga. Chaired by Laila Balga, the meeting hosted presentations by Latvian MP Silvija Šimfa, Norberts Snarskis, Elīna Ālere-Fogele, Edīte Kalniņa, Baiba Giptere (Association for Development of Latgale Suburb), Ināra Hedviga Pūpola (Association for Diabetes in Liepāja), and Valda Stadgale (Society “Jumītis”). Survey of participants was conducted. Coordinator – Lelde Cālīte.

The participants of the National Meeting of PeP adopted a Resolution aimed at fighting poverty in Latvia that was submitted to President of the Republic of Latvia, State Chancellery of Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers and Parliament of the Republic of Latvia, Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia, local governments, NGOs, and the media. In addition, the said institutions received a summary of the results of the survey of people experiencing poverty “People Experiencing Poverty Speak for Themselves” conducted by EAPN-Latvia in Riga, Rucava, and Varakļāni. Translations of these documents have been submitted to the European Commission and EAPN in Brussels. Coordinator – Laila Balga. (See attached Resolution.)

On November 19–20 the Latvian delegation took part in the 2015 European Meeting of PeP “Social Convergence in the EU” in Brussels. Members of the delegation: PeP National Coordinator Elīna Ālere-Fogele, Dzintra Žilde (Latvian Pensioners' Federation), Baiba Giptere, and Ināra Hedviga Pūpola. Coordinators – Elīna Ālere-Fogele and Laila Balga.

On December 9 the Beautiful Charity Day was organized in the city of Riga, at which 62 families experiencing poverty attended a children’s concert and received presents containing food and special presents for their children. Coordinators – Valentīna Volodjko (“Women for Harmony”), Lelde Cālīte, Terēzija Mackare, and Laila Balga.

September – December: EAPN-Latvia poster and the PeP booklet was prepared, printed, and handed out, and information to the media released; results of the survey of participants of PeP meetings were summarized; recommendations to the relevant state institutions were drafted. Coordinator – Laila Balga. (See attached PeP Report 2015.)

Development and Growth of the Network

EAPN-Latvia was founded on November 4, 2013 by seven founding member organizations. At the end of 2015 EAPN-Latvia had 26 member organizations and five associated member organizations. EAPN-Latvia operates throughout the territory of Latvia and has over 50 partners abroad. Since 28th June 2014 EAPN-Latvia is a full-fledged member organization of the international network of NGOs, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN). On 19th September 2014 EAPN-Latvia obtained the status of a public benefit organization. http://www.eapn.lv/index_en.php

On January 21 EAPN-Latvia established a working group of experts to work at the committees of the Parliament of Latvia, at the working groups of ministries of Latvia, of the Riga City Council institutions, and at the Council of the Cooperation Memorandum of Latvian NGOs and the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia. http://www.eapn.lv/interesu_aizstaviba/

In 2015 EAPN-Latvia worked at the Latvian Child Welfare Network (authorized representative Lelde Cālīte); on April 29 the Latvian Child Welfare Network joined Eurochild. <http://www.eapn.lv/latvija/#berniem>

On February 3–4 Laila Balga participated in the EMCO/SPC conference “Inclusive Labor Markets in Europe: the Role of Better Quality Jobs and Inclusion” in Riga, at the National Library of Latvia.

On March 2–3 Head of International and Public Relations at the Latvian Red Cross, which is a member of EAPN-Latvia, Agnese Trofimova and Chair of the Board of Latvian Association for Gender Equality, which is an associated member of EAPN-Latvia, Edīte Kalniņa participated in an international forum of NGOs that took place in Riga as part of the events of the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council.

On March 25 Agnese Trofimova participated in an international conference “Economic Growth and Social Progress in Rural and Urban Areas” organized by European Economic and Social Committee as part of the events of the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council.

On April 16 the 3rd International Art and Music Festival “Days of Ukrainian Culture in the Baltic Sea” was organized by a member of EAPN-Latvia, Ukrainian Centre for Young People and Children in Latvia (led by Olga Berga).