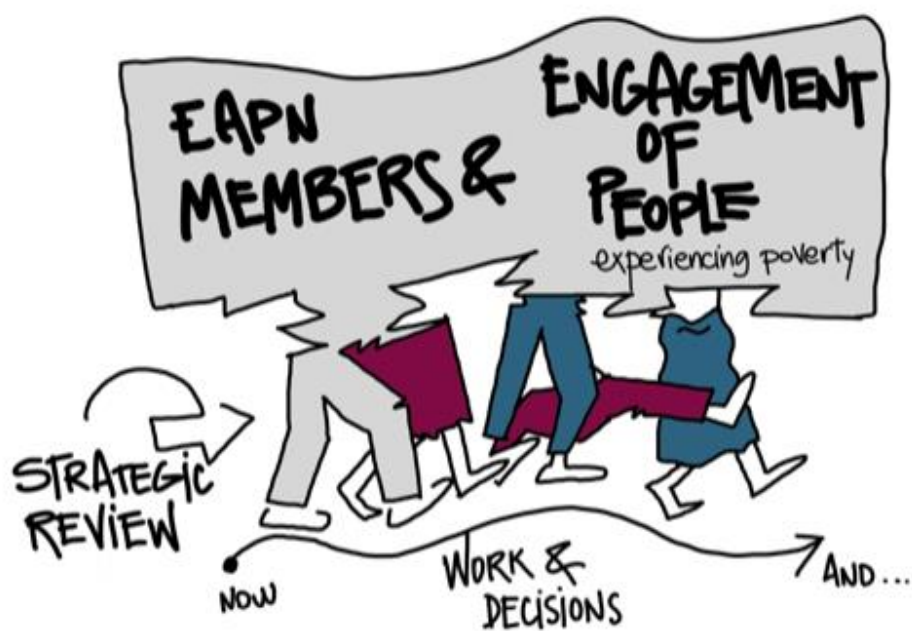




EAPN's Strategic review



Adopted in Helsinki, September 2019

1. Context

- a. 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 by [Phase 1: Reaching a Shared Understanding](#), and a strong mandate to deliver this exercise was given to the EAPN Director and the Bureau.
- b. 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 2018, and then during the General Assembly 2018, with representatives of the Ex Co, EUISG and participants in the Capacity Building Workshop. Discussions continued throughout 2019 within the members, staff team, Bureau, Ex Co and EUISG.
- c. This paper represents the outcome of many discussions, which raised some key questions and challenges, including (but not limited to):
 - Are people experiencing poverty given enough importance in our work and the Strategic Review?
 - How should EAPN enable the participation of people experiencing poverty in our structures?
 - How should EAPN Europe best support its members?
 - How should we best coordinate between the European and the national level to bring about the biggest political impact?
 - How will we change our ways of working in order to maximise on our most important asset, our people?
 - How should EAPN build the public support and pressure which are needed to eradicate poverty?
- d. Our Strategic Review is not meant to provide all the answers to these questions – further discussions and decisions will be needed when we start implementing it in 2020 and beyond.
- e. We stress the fact that EAPN is building on the current work we do, utilising our most important asset, our people’s expertise (national networks and people experiencing poverty), taking the bottom up approach to carry out the implementation of our Vision.
- f. EU advocacy has been a key pillar to position EAPN as the main Anti-poverty Stakeholder with EU institutions and Member States and has provided an entry point for national networks to influence EU and National decision makers.

2. What do we mean by a Theory of Change?

- a. 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 to see in Europe, that is our vision, and then identifies the [major changes](#) which are needed in order to achieve our Vision. Once these major changes are identified, organisational strategies to bring about those-major changes and thus our Vision, should be identified and agreed upon by EAPN.

- b. A Theory of Change allows us to be clear and explicit about our Vision and the major changes we believe are necessary in order to eradicate poverty and social exclusion.
- c. Our Theory of Change is based on an understanding of who we are right now, on our history, on our values, our culture **and** on who we need to be and what we need to do 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 activities that will arise from the Theory of Change represent the most significant changes we need to make to how we work in order to achieve our vision.

3. EAPN's Strategic Review

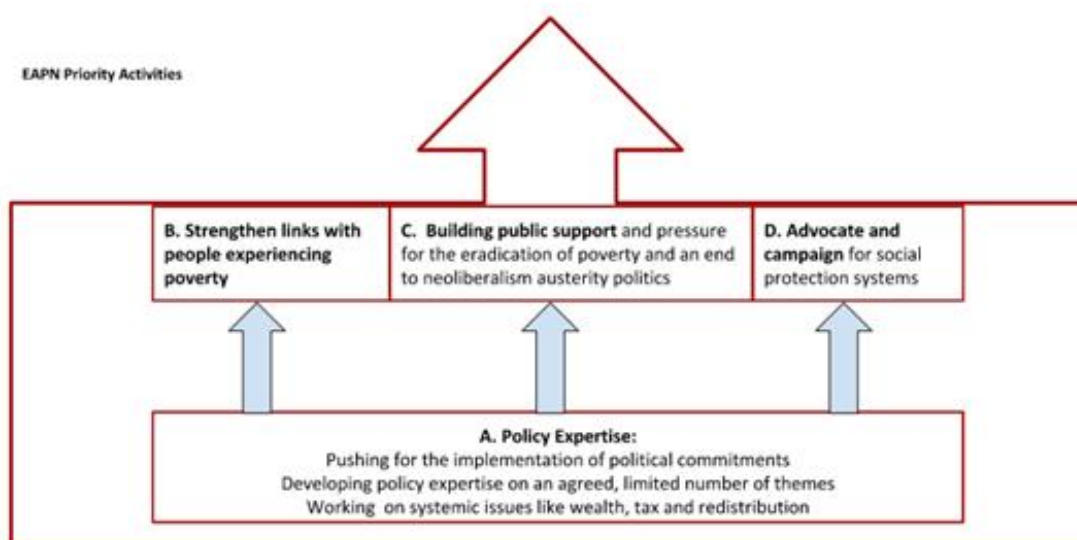
- a. The overall change EAPN wants to see, our Vision, is:

“A sustainable Europe free of poverty and social exclusion, with high levels of equality, where political, social, cultural and economic rights are respected”.

- b. We collectively identified the challenges that we need to overcome in order to achieve our overall change. Based on that, we then (again collectively) mapped the major changes that are necessary to achieve that vision.
- c. We then collectively agreed where EAPN could have most impact, and agreed four priorities, all based on policy expertise in specific key areas.
- d. It is important to reiterate that all of these are supported by a strong EAPN network, members, and wide public support throughout Europe for the eradication of poverty and social exclusion.

4. Strengthening Public Support in Europe for the Eradication of Poverty

- a. We recognise that we need the public more firmly on our side if we are to create the political will to eradicate poverty and thus realise our Vision. More people and organisations need to be brought into the *'fight'* against poverty, the fight for access to political, social, cultural and economic rights. Whilst EAPN has traditionally been strong and successful in political circles, we recognise that we have had less success in convincing ordinary people, and wider civil society, of the need to eradicate poverty in Europe, and that our arguments are the right ones.
- b. We recognise that we need to make progress here. To do so, we need to update and strengthen the focus of our activities, building resources to spend more time, energy and money on public facing campaigning to complement our high-level policy and political advocacy (through quality policy background work, for European Semester etc). This updating will be a key challenge for EAPN moving forward.



Underpinning activities

MORE RESOURCES	MORE COORDINATION	MORE COHERENCE	MORE EVIDENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widen funding base Build public support Train leaders Strengthen comms Support PEP participation Deeper, targeted alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and European Engage members more effectively Build on members' strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all parts of the EAPN are mutually reinforcing with funding, policy, advocacy, campaigns, comms and training, all contributing to the same agreed goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research, policy analysis and evaluation, monitoring trends, participatory-research, stakeholders' analysis, contextual analysis

5. Major Changes we want to see in Europe in order to achieve our Vision

A. Strong, grass-roots, public support for the eradication of poverty across Europe (and beyond)

While we have some political commitment to poverty eradication, public attitudes to poverty and excluded groups (i.e. aporophobia¹) 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 able to make a stronger impact on poverty.

This means EAPN – whose strength and most important assets are our members - needs to have strong members, strong engagement and participation in our workspaces, strong campaigns and political advocacy across our network and beyond. It means an anti-poverty network which really belongs to people experiencing poverty. It means a well-resourced network, with members being able to access EU funds, national funds, philanthropic funds, CSR funds, public donations. EAPN, and the wider ecosystem of anti-poverty organisations and activists must be able to bring meaningful pressure on governments and corporations at key moments. Meaningful links with anti-poverty structures across the world would help strengthen the European network.

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 organisations as well as opening new spaces. We need to explore what this means both for EAPN and for society at large.

C. 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.

D. 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

¹ The fear of poverty and of poor people.

that public finances are healthier, and governments are better able to fund social policies. Tax justice is thus a crucial element in the fight against poverty.

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

These systems are vital to protect the poorest members of our society. The European Minimum Income Network 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.

F. 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.

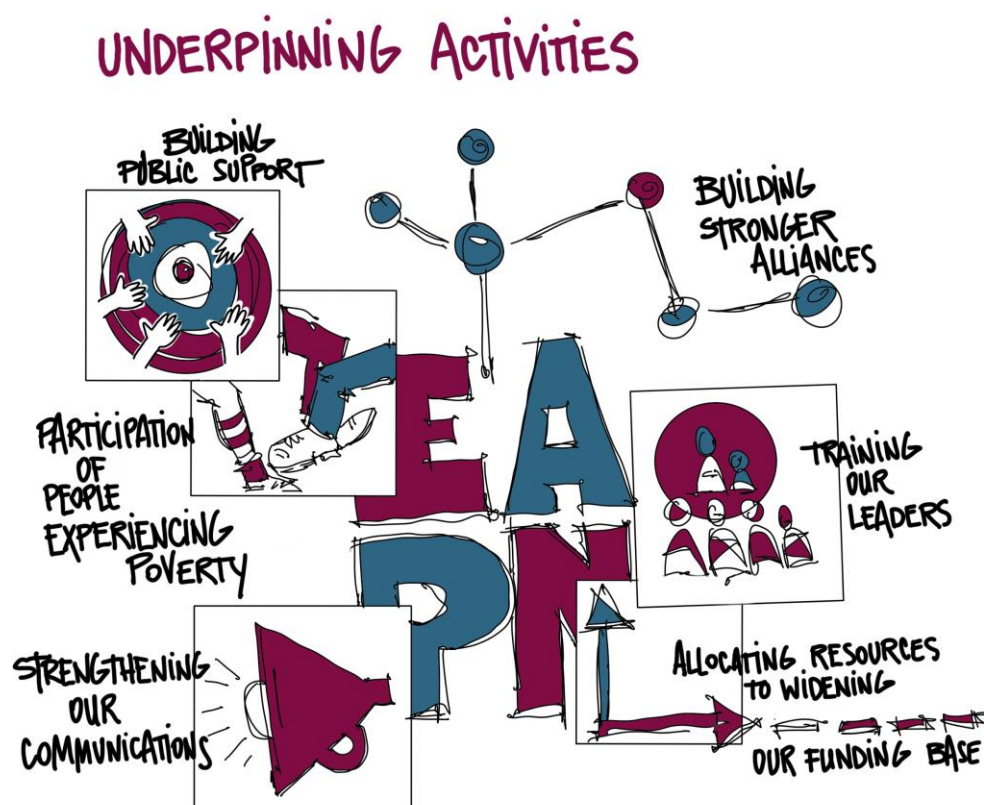
Three of these changes, (C, D and E), i.e. translation of political commitments into results, end to austerity politics, and strong social protection systems and appropriate living wages, can only be achieved if the other three changes, (A, B and F) are achieved, i.e. strong public support for the eradication of poverty, people experiencing poverty having a space to participate in society and processes around decisions, and mitigation of technological, environmental and demographic changes to protect people experiencing poverty.

6. Where could EAPN have the most impact?

a. 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. We have identified and agreed on four priorities, all underpinned by strengthening our network and our members, and strengthening public support for the eradication of poverty.

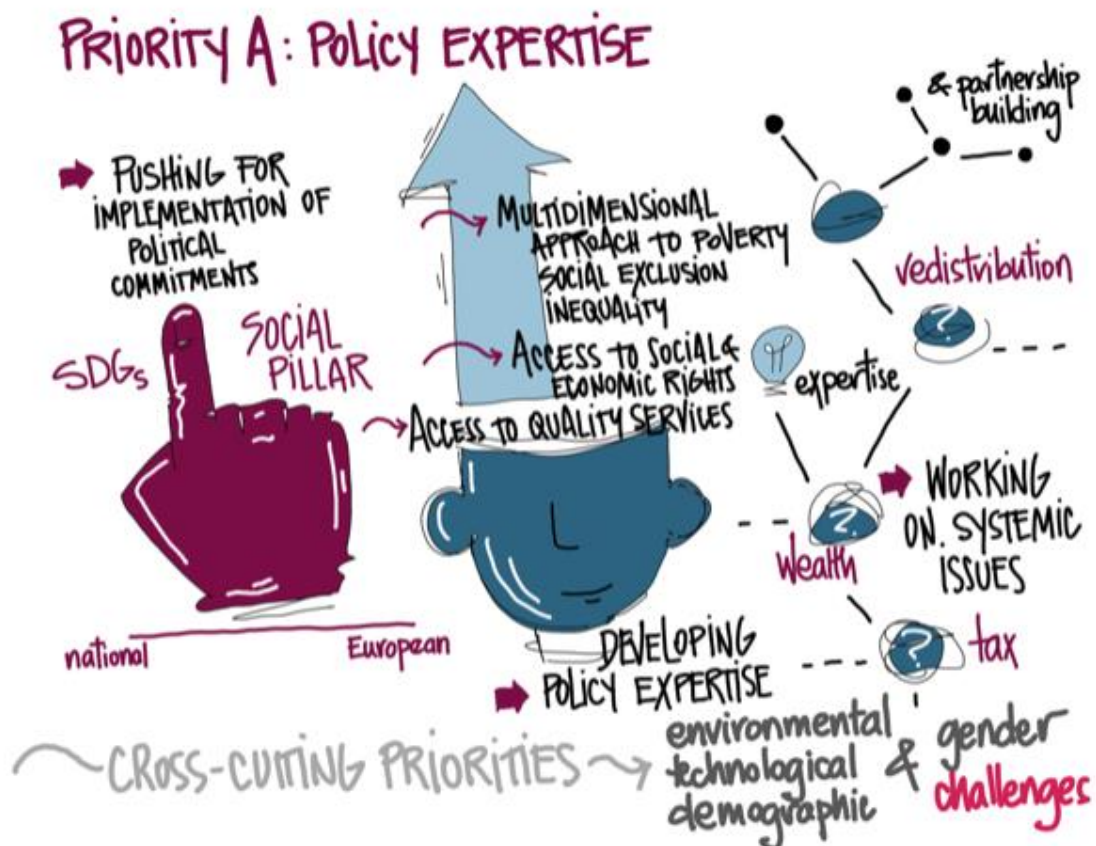
b. Underpinning activities:

Strengthening our network, our members, and public support for the eradication of poverty in all countries across Europe, and building alliances and links with anti-poverty structures across the world. This will mean allocating resources to widening our funding base, to training our leaders, to strengthening our communications, to supporting participation of people experiencing poverty, to building public support, and to building stronger alliances with other likeminded organisations and structures. It will mean ensuring our staff understand and learn from the realities in the national networks, focusing on coordination between the European and national levels, helping national members be involved in EU processes, building on the strength of the national level, and strengthening the coherency of EAPN, ensuring that our policy work is fully connected to our projects, funding, campaigns, communications and training work.



c. Four Priorities:

EAPN has high commitment to strong policy work undertaken through our EU ISG Policy Group, (focusing on EU frameworks like the Semester and the Social Pillar). Policy expertise is the basis for and provides the content for the other 3 priorities.



A. Policy expertise, which has four 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 within key areas, notably: a) **A multidimensional approach to poverty, social exclusion and inequality**, b) **Access to social and economic rights**, c) **Access to quality services**, d) **Cross-cutting priorities, notably Environmental, technological and demographic challenges, and gender**. (Recognising the need to prioritise issues where there is value add for European level work, and which can mobilise our members)
- Working on systemic issues like wealth, tax and redistribution, by developing expertise and working in alliances.
- Monitoring the situation of poverty throughout Europe.

PRIORITY B: STRENGTHEN INVOLVEMENT OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY



B. Strengthen the involvement of people experiencing poverty and ensure that they are meaningfully involved in, and leading, grassroots anti-poverty advocacy work and campaigns around poverty, inequality, precarious work, digitalisation, social protection (with a focus on minimum income), living wages, at national and European levels. We will aim to base our policy work on participatory research with people experiencing poverty. We will amplify the voice of individuals and groups living in poverty so that their authentic experience is heard, understood and used by the media, policy makers and the public. Work coming out of the 2017 Dutch Resolution and the Communication group (Comm'On) will be the basis for this priority.



C. 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, to support our policy messages.



D. 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 European political processes with the most potential impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion. EAPN will focus this advocacy and campaigning firmly on European Institutions – the Commission, the Council and the Parliament, recognising the key role that Member States play in all institutions.

d. This Strategic Review will be our compass, guiding our work and decisions for the future. We recognise the need for further detailed discussions throughout the network, in order to agree on the implementation. We recognise the need to tread carefully, reforming at a pace which does not undermine the core strengths of EAPN – national networks, and the engagement of people experiencing poverty. We also recognise the need to build on the experience of our members when working on its implementation.

e. We recognise that our members are 'sovereign' actors and ultimately will decide for themselves which European actions they will contribute to, judging where they can best contribute according to their strengths and plans.

f. Through the changes we will make as a result of this 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 fight against poverty in Europe and beyond. We can be more relevant and 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.

g. 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.

h. EAPN will revisit and review the Strategic Review document every three years, to ensure that our thinking is up to date and reflects EAPN's analysis of the economics arising from the current political and social climate. The Ex Co will draw up an evaluation document.

i. EAPN, with the involvement of the members, will create a long-term, mid-term and short-term action plan to guide, monitor and evaluate the implementation of our Strategic Review.

Annex 1. The status of this document

This paper is issued on behalf of the European Anti-Poverty Network.

The original draft was produced by Noeleen Hartigan, our Strategic Consultant supporting this process, following a PESTLE analysis by the staff team and Bureau, and detailed discussions around our Theory of Change. This first draft went through many iterations, being considered and discussed by the Executive Committee twice, by two joint meetings between the Executive Committee and the EUISG, and finally at the General Assembly in 2019. Following each discussion, comments and feedback were incorporated into the paper. The redrafting was coordinated by Leo Williams (Director) and Noeleen Hartigan (Strategic Consultant) with the support of the Bureau. It was possible to incorporate most of the inputs received – with the exception of a proposed alternative image on p4, of which parts were used, though not the whole image. The final version was signed off by an ordinary majority of the EAPN General Assembly.

Thanks go to all EAPN members for their detailed comments and passionate discussions about this Strategic Review.

INFORMATION AND CONTACT

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See EAPN publications and activities on www.eapn.eu

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) is an independent network of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union, established in 1990.



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This publication has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>

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