**EUISG Webinar Exchange: Wednesday 6 May 10-12.15 am**

**EAPN Advocacy on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and on Adequate Income**

**Report**

***Co-Chairs: Sian Jones/Mathias Maucher***

**Agenda**

**Objectives**

* *To discuss and agree changes in the revised EAPN draft response to the EC consultation on an action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights*
* *To exchange and amend EAPN’s revised draft position on adequate income (minimum income and minimum/living wage)*
* *To discuss and agree national action & advocacy on the consultation and position paper, in the COVID19 context*

**10.00 Welcome/Introduction/objectives of webinar: *Sian Jones, EAPN Policy Coordinator***

***Part 1: EAPN response and action on EPSR Action Plan consultation***

**10.10 Presentation of** [**EAPN consultation response**](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EAPN-6c-EAPN-proposals-for-an-Action-Plan-to-implement-the-European-Pillar-of-Social-Rights-4246.docx) **to EPSR Action Plan and action plan for coordinating national responses: *Sian Jones, EAPN Policy Coordinator***

**10.20 Discussion/agreement on changes on key questions: 1 and 2 in plenary.**

1. *Do you agree with the overall approach? What’s missing/ COVID19 context/ priorities for summary document*
2. *What changes/or what is missing in sections on:*

* *Principle 1: Education/training and lifelong learning*
* *Principle 12: Social Protection*
* *Principle 20: Access to Essential Services*

*(Principle 14 and 6 will be discussed in the 2nd session)*

**10.50 3 Break-out rooms led by Steering Group members to discuss*:***

***3. What coordinated response/action at national level or by European Organizations?***

**11.10 Short Feedback from 3 groups in plenary and conclusions**

**11.15 5-minute comfort break!**

***Part 2: EAPN’s position paper on adequate income***

**11.20 Presentation of** [**EAPN’s draft position**](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EAPN-6e-EAPN-Position-Paper-Adequate-Income-MI-MW-DRAFT-30-03-20-4245.docx) **on adequate income: Mathias Maucher, *EAPN Policy Officer***

**11.30 Discussion on key questions in plenary**

*1. Are important aspects missing in the DRAFT Position Paper for your advocacy work for adequate, accessible and enabling minimum income and decent minimum wages in your country?*

*2. Is chapter 3.4 on addressing concerns expressed vis-à-vis EU-level legislative action on minimum income clear? Are these arguments helpful for you in your country? Which points are missing and what then should be the “EAPN reply”?*

*3. Are there issues, lines of argumentations or evidence presented to make the case both for the need of a Framework Directive on Minimum Income and for an EU Framework on Minimum Wage which are not clear for you?*

**12.05 Conclusions on adequate income position: *Mathias Maucher, Policy Officer***

**12.10 Wrapping up, next steps and next webinar: *Sian Jones: EAPN Policy Coordinator***

**Notes from the Meeting**

**Participants**

*National Networks*: Judith Tobac, Belgium, Aleksandra Zivković, Croatia, Iva Kuchyňková and Ivo Kaplan, Czech Republic, Malte Wingender, Denmark, Anna Järvinen, Finland, Jeanne Dietrich, France, Jürgen Schneider, Germany, Dina Vardamaratou, Greece, Krisztina Jasz, Hungary, Laufey Olafsdottir, Iceland, Paul Ginnell & Irene Byrne, Ireland, Elina Fogele, Latvia, Rimgailė Matulionytė, Lithuania, André Bonello, Malta, Sonja Leemkuil, Netherlands, Olav Strommen, Norway, Ryszard Szarfenberg, Poland, Paula Cruz, Portugal, Anna Szuhová, Slovakia, Živa Humer, Slovenia, Graciela Malgesini, Spain, Katherine Duffy, UK

*European Organisation*s: Philippe Seidel, AGE, Stefan Kitzmann, Eurodiaconia, Fran McDonnell, IFSW

*EAPN Staff:* Sian Jones, Mathias Maucher

*Apologies*: Michalis Rossis, Cyprus, Marija Babović, Serbia

**Introduction**

**Sian** welcomed the participants, introduced the two main topics of the meeting and highlighted the objectives of the webinar in relation to the [EAPN response to the consultation](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EAPN-6c-EAPN-proposals-for-an-Action-Plan-to-implement-the-European-Pillar-of-Social-Rights-4246.docx) on the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan and action and the EAPN Position Paper on Adequate Income. Both documents were circulated to the EUISG on 30 March. She introduced the purpose and functioning of the break-out session in part 1 and referred to the questions to be discussed then, highlighting that the floor will be given entirely to EAPN members to share information on the national actions and approach to the consultation on the EPSR Action Plan they take or what they plan to do as EO. Sian explained that the EPSR Principles 14 and 6 will be discussed in the second part and referred to the questions for discussion on the EAPN Position Paper on Adequate Income.

***Part 1: EAPN response and action on EPSR Action Plan consultation***

In the Q&A session following **Sian’s presentation** the following points were raised:

* **Graciela (EAPN ES)**: Principle 19 EPSR (Housing and homelessness) is very essential for EAPN Spain and most probably also for other National Networks. This should be reflected in the EAPN Response. It would be important to ask for better indicators for both (social) housing and homelessness and for comparable statistics, as e.g. the available statistics do not cover sub-standard housing. It would also be important to better highlight the request that housing costs should not go beyond 25% of the household income. Sian replied that the EAPN Response would be backed up and updated with information from FEANTSA.
* **Jeanne (EAPN FR)**: In line with the request from Graciela highlighted the importance of calling for a maximum amount for housing costs of 25%. The demand for EU-wide statistics on housing and homelessness is even more crucial as in France since 2012 data on homelessness are not available.
* **Paula (EAPN PT)**: congratulated the staff on a good document, but there is a need to clarify the priorities. COVID-19 should be clearly referenced in the introduction, as making even more essential the guarantee of social rights and public services.
* **Katherine (EAPN UK)**: The EAPN Reply should also touch upon the long-term impact of COVID19 on the health systems and health inequalities as well as on our economies where unemployment has already been soaring. Even though evictions are not allowed for 3 months, soon this problem will arise again, when e.g. those on Furlough Pay will not be able to afford their housing costs. It is correct to highlight the particular negative effects of COVID19 on Roma, but also BMEP or similar categories of ethnic minorities in other countries should also be mentioned, as they are highly affected by the health risks stemming from the Coronavirus as they are often working as frontline workers in private and public services with customer/client contact or as they need to take the public transport system. We should also be clearer on the just transition, ensuring that poor people don’t carry the burden.
* **Anna (EAPN FI)**: From Finnish perspective and policy discussion the term “rent regulation” is not well accepted, because this was the traditional approach and it didn’t work well. It was agreed that Anna will propose in writing an alternative formulation.
* **Philippe (AGE)**: AGE will focus in its reply on the EPSR principles for long-term care and health. This will comprise the aspects better quality services, better working conditions, a shift away from a primarily medical approach to care and a focus on human and users’ rights.

Going back to principles 12, 20 and 1 EPSR mainly focused on in her presentation, **Sian** clarified in relation to principle 12 “Social protection” that the EAPN demand for a “Golden Rule on Social Protection Spending” – i.e. social protection expenditure should not fall under 35% is included in the 2018 [EAPN Financing Social Protection Reflection Paper](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/EAPN-2018-EAPN-reflection-paper-on-Financing-for-Social-Protection.pdf) (p. 7) and reflected further in the EAPN Position Paper on post 2020: [Delivering Agenda 2030 for people and planet: EAPN proposals for a post Europe 2020 strategy](https://www.eapn.eu/delivering-agenda-2030-for-people-and-planet-eapn-proposals-for-a-post-europe-2020-strategy/)

When looking at principle 20 “Essential services” and the other principles put in this section, **Fran (ISFW)** asked for a general reference to “health and social services”, their link and the importance of social services. This has become again very clear with the COVID19 epidemic. This was agreed. **Graciela (EAPN ES)** highlighted the need to also refer to SDGs as benchmarks. Sian replied that this will be done, but that some members (eg EAPN PT) in their assessment of the Country Reports had shown that this also needs to be done with caution as there is a risk that the policies are less ambitious and targets often already achieved by EU MS as they focus more on the extreme poverty measures. **Paul (EAPN IE)** welcomed that the question of child poverty and the related EU-level requests eg Child Guarantee by EAPN are framed by the broader demand for a comprehensive and integrated child poverty strategy ie Investing in Children and a broader anti-poverty strategy. **Sonja (EAPN NL)** underlined the importance of the Child Guarantee and support to early childhood education and learning.

No further oral comments or requests to changes were made on principle 1 “Education”. **Sian** emphasized again that the EU-level demands exclusively concern “soft-law” measures and build on the recent [EAPN Report on Education, Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning](https://www.eapn.eu/leaving-nobody-behind-ensuring-education-vocational-training-and-lifelong-learning-contributes-to-the-prevention-and-reduction-of-poverty-and-social-exclusion-eapn-key-issues-and-promising-pract/) issued in April 2020.

**Sonja (EAPN NL)** made written contributions via the chat function: 1) Key message on housing: Support the growth of new housing local/regional social housing cooperatives, owned by the people themselves. ESF+ funding should be made available here. 2) Energy poverty should be taken higher up on the agenda in the New Green Deal debates, in addition to the creation of new green jobs. 3) Access to childcare: And we should never forget what Spinoza taught us that playing is an activity that one cannot take serious enough. 4) In order to make the EPSR visible you need (financial) support to organisations. Often money is the problem to participate as pep, travel costs etc. This problem has been exacerbated by the COVID19 crises.

***Reporting back from three break-out rooms on national actions and approach to consultation response on EPSR Action Plan***

Break-out room 1

**Rapporteur**: Katherine (UK).

* Group raised the issue of how to use the EPSR: need to make it visible at national level. In the response say what we want, from national governments and the EU
* Only IE and FI planning at the moment to respond to the consultation, but others said they would now look at it. Most members completely focussed on this. We must link the short to the long-term measures.
* It would be important to underline/quote and build on current positive developments: eg Finland with a committee to reform Social Protection. Croatia underlining the need to make the social services more visible and social protection is a focus, apart from Health. IFSW – the link between health and care services, link between essential services and social protection, Malta – interesting example of calculating a reference budget for needs now under COVID19 ie lockdown.

**Participants**: Dina/EAPN EL, Anna/EAPN FI, Aleksandra/EAPN HR, Irene/EAPN IE, Elina/EAPN LT, Andre/EAPN MT, Katherine/EAPN UK, Fran/IFSW.

**Dina/EAPN EL**: Our priority is COVID-19, with the loss of jobs and the fears that this will have long-term impacts promoting newly precarious forms of work, also the access to health and social services, the multiple layers of poverty which are not sufficiently captured or responded to in the government’s response. We will try to make this the basis of our input to the consultation.

**Anna/EAPN FI**: We haven’t made our response yet, but we will, and also one from our employers SOSTE, but they will be different. We will build/refer to the EAPN EU response but prioritize our main issues. We will try to make it visible but sending it to politicians. The ministry of social affairs is organizing a sub-committee. There will be a new Parliamentary Committee on social security which we will use to make an input to and allude to the EPSR and follow up.

**Aleksandra/EAPN HR:** The network is meeting today. We use and refer to the EAPN documents they are very useful for our work. We will focus on social protection, which is invisible, and should be part/connected to the Health department. This is the main focus of the COVID19 plan, not on social protection. NGOs are also very exposed, and not vocal. We’re very concerned about the most vulnerable groups – i.e. homeless and the issue of minimum income.

**Irene/EAPN IE**: We will do a response and link the EAPN EU response. We will focus on adequate income and essential services. We already have reference budgets developed in Ireland and see them as crucial as an indicator/benchmark for adequacy of minimum income and minimum wage. We also want to build on the momentum of COVID19 which has provoked some positive measures from the Irish Government. We have a new government and it’s an opportunity to make some progress.

**Elina/EAPN LT:** For us as well COVID-19 is the priority now, and it has implications not just for the short-term, and perhaps makes us refocus our priorities e.g. work-life balance has been highlighted, the low level and inadequacy of minimum income, the need to guarantee a decent income. Concerns about reference budgets, which are useful, but must enable a decent life rather than a very minimal consumption basket. This will be our focus.

**Andre/EAPN MT**: COVID-19 is dominant for us. We have put together solidarity boxes ie national reference budgets for survival in the current situation, calculating the necessary baskets of goods and services, and then highlighting the gaps with the proposals from government. This provides a concrete example and way of demonstrating the real needs in monetary terms and then highlighting the gaps. This will be a key focus of our demands and proposals on Minimum Income in the EPSR response.

**Fran/IFSW:** We’ve set up a working group to work on COVID19 and link to EPSR, and will do a response, focussing on essential services, incorporated in an adequate social protection system. We’re very grateful for the EAPN document. Ours will be shorter focussing on our key issues.

Break-out room 2

**Rapporteur**: Philippe (AGE).

* All members trying to balance immediate impact from COVID-19, and the link to longer term measures in EPSR. However, governments only focussed on COVID-19.
* EAPN’s draft EU response is seen as helpful, but needs to integrate COVID-19
* Several members are planning meetings in relation to the EPSR: CZ, SL, NL and IE
* Eurodiaconia will prepare a response with examples from members, and where governments need to take action.
* EAPN LT will take up the EPSR in the Poverty Watch. Government has already made a proposal about implementation of EPSR, but not an action plan.

**Participants**: Ivo/EAPN CZ, Paul/EAPN IE, Rimgailė/EAPN LT, Sonja/EAPN NL, Ryszard/EAPN PL, Paula EAPN PT, Živa/EAPN SI,Philippe/AGE, Stefan/Eurodiaconia.

**Ivo/EAPN CZ**: Everything is focused on COVID measures, so focus only on those who are in trouble because of the crisis. No measures taken for the longer-term future. 21 May GA of EAPN CZ to talk about EPSR. Need to take on board the Green New Deal and ensure it is a social deal.

**Paul/EAPN IE**: No plan as of yet, but it will come. Currently drafting a Poverty Watch/COVID19 Recovery Document. Linking this to a submission to the consultation on EPSR a good idea instead of having multiple documents.

**Rimgailė/EAPN LT**: EAPN LT will take up the European Pillar of Social Rights in Poverty Watch for Lithuania. Proposal from vice-president on how to implement the EPSR, mainly a monitoring report rather than an action plan. Matrix showing how EU funds are used to implement the pillar – quite disappointing. EAPN LT will push for a clear action plan and goals.

**Sonja/EAPN NL**: Connecting the work on the AP EPSR to poverty watch a good idea. Held workshop in cities and regions on EPSR. Not about awareness but to discuss the principles. Education, minimum income included. Letters about EPSR sent to the ministry and national ministries.

**Ryszard/EAPN PL**: Planning poverty watch with the EPSR, using multidimensional poverty concepts, linked to other rights than minimum income.

**Paula/EAPN PT**: Document responding to the crisis, with messages from different areas/organisations and from the field; EAPN reply particularly good and contains very important messages. EAPN PT will try to translate the summary and send it to relevant stakeholders at national level. In 2019 they did a number of sessions to raise awareness of the EPSR and highlight the upcoming consultation. They will do this again now, especially in the current context.

**Živa/EAPN SI**: Slovenian National Network is “a little baby only” for now, but there will be a meeting with the network to see which steps to be taken. A lot of the EAPN discussion is useful for informing the local level member organisations.

**Philippe/AGE**: AGE will issue a document on the impact of the crisis, with a focus on health and long-term care, access to social protection, employment policies such as temporary unemployment and investment in skills; investment protection for small savers.

**Stefan/Eurodiaconia**: Like EAPN’s approach, Eurodiaconia reply to be submitted ASAP, angle more on showcasing what members are doing to implement the EPSR, but also including a call for action. Many issues are still the same as in 2017/2018.

Break-out room 3

**Rapporteur**: Mathias (EAPN)

* All participants intend to reply to the consultation, except for Iceland and Norway who are not in the EU. Iceland plans to give input before the government election on the gaps in the welfare state which COVID-19 has exposed.
* All members give a strong priority to Minimum Income, also national legislation and implementation.
* Concrete action: France will make a statement on Europe day – May 9th. In Germany, the welfare organizations are focussing on challenges to health and social services and need to support NGO services.

**Participants**: Judith/EAPN BE, Iva/EAPN CZ, Jürgen/EAPN DE, Malte/EAPN DK, Graciela/EAPN ES, Jeanne/EAPN FR, Laufey/EAPN IS, Olav/EAPN NO.

**Judith/EAPN BE**: EAPN BE will reply and attach the EAPN response, but the plans need still to be finalised. Currently in Belgium there is a momentum with the COVID19 crises to increase the minimum income benefits. BAPN will also use the work on the consultation on the EPSR AP as input to the Belgian Anti-Poverty Strategy which is currently being discussed. It’s, however, not yet clear which targets or benchmarks will be used and how ambitious they will be, not least as the Europe 2020 Strategy will come to an end this year and therefore the EU-level framework is lacking.

**Iva/EAPN CZ**: Plans have still to be elaborated more in detail. 21 May GA of EAPN CZ to talk about EPSR. Current focus on impact of COVID19 on services for children and elderly persons. The main thematic focus is on minimum income and to get it increased.

**Jürgen/EAPN DE**: EAPN DE plans to reply to the consultation on the EPSR AP and would then also add the EAPN response. A big problem currently is the closure of schools and child-care facilities. COVID19 reveals deficits when it comes to digital learning (options) for pupils, in particular for those from socially disadvantaged families and neighbourhoods. In Germany many PeP organisations now have big structural and financial problems and do not get much support from the big welfare organisations because they are more focusing on their own services, funding basis, etc. This will unfortunately have a negative impact on the participation of pep people.

**Malte/EAPN DK**: They will make an own reply. EAPN DK had planned to organise a conference on minimum income in spring which had to be cancelled and might take place in the autumn now.

**Graciela/EAPN ES**: EAPN ES will prepare an own reply to the to the consultation on the EPSR AP, coordinated with the 18 regional networks. In Spain it’s a crucial moment to achieve progress on minimum income and to get a permanent national-wide minimum income schemes, not only the emergency measures already in place.

**Jeanne/EAPN FR**: We still have to discuss and decide on our concrete work in relation to the consultation on the EPSR AP. EAPN France will issue a Press Release for the 9 May Europe Day, also referring to the impacts of COVID19 and how to best address them.

**Laufey/EAPN IS**: They are working with their government to react to the COVID19-related government measures EAPN IS could contribute to the consultation on the EPSR AP if this makes sense for an organisation from a non-EU MS. Mathias said EAPN would try to clarify this.

**Olav/EAPN NO**: EAPN NO works on an action plan to fight poverty and related advocacy work ahead of the 2021 general elections. The thematic focus is on strengthening the welfare state, filling existing gaps in social protection and promoting social rights. EAPN NO will also answer to the EAPN COVID19 questionnaire.

***Part 2: EAPN’s position paper on adequate income***

In the Q&A session following **Mathias’ presentation** the following points were raised:

* **Judith/EAPN BE** wondered if the very technical and detailed position paper could be shortened and the key messages and joint EAPN demands be given more prominence, so that it is easier to grasp and can be used by the National Networks. A summary could help.
* **Jürgen/EAPN DE** added the comment via the chat that also according to the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) (ember of EAPN DE) overall, the paper is good and comprehensive, but could be shortened. In addition, EAPN DE proposes to make a reference to the current Corona situation. Jürgen also underlined that the statutory minimum wage is still too low in Germany and does not apply to all professions and sectors.
* **Malte/EAPN DK** highlighted that the interrelatedness between minimum income and minimum wage is very important, for the paper and for their policy work. He underlined that from a Danish perspective a “positive hierarchy” indeed needs to be established as also otherwise fierce resistance from the trade unions and non-acceptance by general public. Trade unions fear that if the amount of minimum income is close to the minimum wage (or were even higher) that then they would lose power in the collective bargaining system established (with DK having no statutory minimum wage). **Olav/EAPN NO** added in the chat that Malte’s argument is the same as the core argument in Norway. And we find it difficult to counter as we must have trade unions on board if something is going to happen, a strong counter argument is needed.
* **Graciela/EAPN ES** indicated that the concept of “living wages” is not used in Spain and could not be translated (as they also plan a Spanish translation of the position paper or at least of parts of it). A glossary on terms such as “living wage” or “reference budget” could help and/or a footnote, briefly explaining the term. She also mentioned that EAPN ES is running a campaign “Yes to minimum Income” for which they also had to elaborate arguments to debunk the critics, also from national parties and stakeholders. These arguments will be shared with the Policy Team.
* **Paul/EAPN IE** underlined the usefulness of reference budgets and shortly referred to existing models and experience in Ireland. A further exchange on this topic within EAPN would be most welcome.
* **Sonja/EAPN NL** commented via the chat function that indeed there can be problems with using EU data or EC publications and their assessment on the adequacy of minimum income in the Netherlands. According to the Dutch Central Plan Bureau, in the Netherlands the minimum wage is 47% of the median wage, which is lower than in most other OECD countries, see figure 3.1. OECD statistics. But there are different definitions, views and data sources, one says the minimum wage is almost 60% of the median wage. She recalled that ork is increasingly not a viable route out of poverty How important an active and clear EU strategy and proposal on minimum wages is also shown by the new opinion (April 2020) of the Dutch Central Planning Bureau. They state that an increase of 10% of the minimum wage is no big problem for the Dutch economy. One of the indicators for this major change of their advice is the fact that Germany nowadays has a statutory minimum wage. This shows how paramount EU pressure is to create a fair and adequate minimum income and minimum wage in the MS. In the Netherlands, the current legislation foresees that an increase in the minimum wage means the same (percentage/relative) increase in social assistance and AOW, the state pension law.
* **Katherine/EAPN UK** welcomed the thorough position paper, with no important aspect lacking. She made the suggestion to put chapters retracing the “minimum income history” and EAPN’s work on it in the past to the Annex and to focus on the elements needed to make the case for a Framework Directive. She proposed to be clearer on what is understood by minimum income benefits and schemes in the paper and to add that we also talk about “social assistance (schemes)”. Katherine emphasised the need to focus in particular on the aspect of adequacy as only sufficiently high amounts of minimum income would help to prevent and reduce poverty.

***Wrapping up, next steps, next meetings***

**Sian** thanked everybody for the active participation. She asked everybody to send additional comments or input on the two papers by Monday, 11 May with the aim of finalizing the paper for the end of May. A summary and excerpt will be also completed. **Mathias** added that the aim is to have the EAPN Position Paper on Adequate Income ready by the Policy Team by 15 May and that the written comments received so far from EAPN CZ, DE, FI, IE, PT and the IFSW as well as the feedback received during the meeting would be considered and taken on board to the extent possible.

**Sian** announced that the next webinar meeting will be EAPN Spain’s Forum Review of Europe 2020 on Monday 18 May, 15-18, organised by Graciela/EAPN Spain. EUISG members are asked to contact Graciela to register and to indicate if they are interested in making a specific input to the forum and should do so by Friday, 8 May. **Graciela, EAPN ES** added information on the format, programme and objective of the event, initially planned for Thursday, 19 March in Madrid, and encouraged all EU ISG members to actively participate.

**Sian** also informed the participants that the day after, on Tuesday, 19 May, 10-12, another EUISG ZOOM webinar will be organised to exchange on the EAPN [Comm’on Guidelines](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EAPN-5a-Common-guidelines-Draft-March-2020-4160.docx),which is a key part of the implementation of the Strategic Review, involving EAPN’s Communication Officer Elke. The Guidelines give advice on linking participation to drive our communication and policy work, and therefore will have a big impact on the EUISG work.

Finally, **Sian** announced that on 2 June another Zoom Webinar on Poverty Watches and the Green Deal is planned, 10-12, but final timing and programme still need to be confirmed.