**EUISG Webinar Poverty Watch 2 June 2020 – Notes from Break-Out Session 2**

**3 questions:**

**1) What plans do you have for a national Poverty Watch 2020? Will you include COVID-19 impact set within overall poverty developments?**

**2) How can you better involve/ build on the lived experience of people in poverty?**

**3) What help/support do you need?**

**6 participants**: Paul Ginnell – IE, Marija Babovic – RS, Sonja Leemkuil – NL, Krisztina Jasz – HU, Olav Strømmen – NO, Jiří Vraspír – CZ.

**EAPN Staff**: Rebecca

EAPN Ireland, Serbia, Hungary & Netherlands will produce a PW for sure. EAPN Czechia and Norway are planning on producing one.

**EAPN Ireland**: This will be their 3rd PW. None produced last year. It will be different – more poverty-focussed. It will show the reality – statistics and then different themes: income, housing, services, decent work, access to employment for everyone. Ireland formerly had a strong community sector which was important for EAPN IE but which has suffered lots of cuts over the last decade. There is a push for refunding now, and COVID comes into that. We must build on the positives as well as tackling the negatives. EAPN IE will make a submission to the Pillar of Social Rights consultation and an annual submission for funding too so trying to reuse/rewrite the PW for those different targets. It is already drafted so ready for the end of June. There is not as much participation as would like – using quotes from other work done, but not easy at this stage.

**EAPN Hungary**: Not discussed yet how within the Network but will integrate the work with their project with civic organisations (including the biggest organisation in community development). There are involved special working groups on education, social transfers, faith-based organising in Hungary. Krisztina is expert in the first two groups. They changed their methods and began collecting food & cleaning products & devices for kids and gained a lot of media attention. *Chancelab* has become well-known! Krisztina is in the media a lot and was nominated as hero of covid-19 by a 14-year-old boy – high point of her career for her! They will use this background to make the PW visible and popular. They will show how fragile the social system is – due to COVID – the public works scheme being totally unsustainable and unemployment through the roof. It will go from 7,5% up to 10% so the highest in Europe. Also social transfers are hit badly in segregated areas. They are running a campaign for a doubled family allowance, which has not raised in years in HU.

[Comment from Marija: The Hungarian and Serbian Presidents are good friends now! The Serbian President says RS will have the highest GDP this year!!]

**EAPN Norway**: They are planning on producing a PW but scale depends on resources. They are only 2 in the office this year. They will update facts from the old one and focus on the same issues as the situation hasn’t changed that much. They will try to include the impact of covid-19 and want to integrate with advocacy work. They made an advocacy action plan for political lobbying up to the 2021 elections. Recommendations to be based on that plan. Issue areas are defined in meetings with members & PeP so participation is anchored in that way. Quotes were not used last time. If time, will include quotes this time. Good idea from Lithuania to use questionnaires for members involved with PeP.

**EAPN Netherlands**: Covid has created attention but poverty must remain our n° 1 priority. Must involve PeP – this is possible at local level but use of skype is problematic for some. They will focus on assistance for people with disabilities. There has been for 4 years a participation law saying that those unemployed before must have at least 12 hours subsidised work. After 2 years people lose jobs, and there have been cuts made here. There is a discussion taking place on minimum income and statutory minimum wage - whether to higher/lower it – and Covid comes in here. The number of unemployment is uncertain at the moment. Working poor and youth homelessness is increasing (covid here too). Labour migrants is another issue: Rules are flouted such as driving with 6 people in a car. There has been a Covid breakout in some companies with people living in Germany and working in the Netherlands. There has also been a change in the *“Wajong” - a benefit for people who have an illness or disability before the age of 18 or during a study. Because of this illness or handicap they can never work again.”* In order to invite and better involve PeP they would need money for their travel costs, but currently it’s obviously not possible to organise a PeP meeting at regional/national level.

**EAPN Czechia**: [Jiří mentioned that he works at Caritas]. They plan on doing a PW. There is a strong impact from covid so this will be included for sure. They will hold a meeting of 100 people, with journalists and experts and PeP, in Sept/Oct and this will be the way to get their messages. Topics: remain social & affordable housing; ‘social-health border’ problematics – set of problems not fitting the health area – e.g. can be caring houses for older people; Minimum Income. The minimum wage is so low that people are not motivated to work but rather stay on benefits. Wages need to rise so that Minimum Income will rise too, as it is not adequate. They used case studies from PeP lately, in national questionnaire on Covid-19. Support is needed to try to use journalists and politicians to get a bigger impact of the PW.

**EAPN Serbia**: They will focus on Covid-impact, but not possible to measure the poverty rates exactly. Covid only revealed the real size of inequality and structural gaps which already exist. They will try to involve more PeP – not easy as hard to mobilise people in network at the moment. Grassroots organisations are marginalised for years and especially those without funds. They face a dilemma – difficult to produce recommendations, because they don’t find what’s useful to recommend to this government and they misuse statistics. They have signed petitions on new laws on statutory protections as damaging steps have been taken. They will use the PW for awareness-raising and general discussion rather than having politicians as a target. Elections are being boycotted by the opposition party so likely no change of government unfortunately.