



Annual report 2019

In this annual report we show what we as EAPN Netherlands have done in the past year. Starting with a short historical sketch of what has emerged and what has disappeared, making clear how important it is to keep poverty and social exclusion on the political and social agendas. And as we look back, we are confronted with how nature forces our societies to a near standstill. A virus is rippling all over the world and from scarcity, in this case to intensive care places, safety equipment and care providers, we are all in the Netherlands in what is called the intelligent lockdown. Here too we see that people who live in a financially and socially vulnerable position are hit again. And there are more 'new' poor who have seen their income disappear because jobs and companies are lost or will be lost due to the enormous consequences of the corona crisis. For us as EAPN Netherlands, this means extra attention and extra work to ensure that attention for these groups will be asked. We have had an eventful year and the year we are in may be even more eventful. But first our retrospect and be surprised by this rich report and the work done by a powerful group of active EAPN people, who do this work completely voluntarily, from passion, experience and from their heart.

Quinta Ansem, President EAPN Netherlands

Historical perspective

2019, a year that continued to develop. A year in which long-term discussions were held, where policy and activities were looked at and that passed as an almost self-evident time. A transition year leading to 2020, to the 30st anniversary of the European Anti Poverty Network Europe (EAPN) and of EAPN Netherlands (EAPN NL). Only when you are confronted with this you realize how long we have been fighting to keep poverty and social exclusion on the oh so important political and social agendas. Everything that has arisen, has also gone down again, sometimes quickly, sometimes very gradually. For example, Divosa started client participation in 1984. With a pilot in 6 municipalities, including Kerkrade, Haarlemmermeer and Weesp. An activity that later was included in an article in the Work and Social Assistance Act and thus received a legal framework, which was followed in many places. Now you look around and you see that few municipalities have a client council and that client participation has collapsed. As if it was never there. That is the story of our work: starting over and over, reinventing the wheel again and again. When we started the local poverty conferences in 2005, this different approach was increasingly welcomed. That too has blown over. In general, you can say that in the year in which we accomplish the third decade, the voice of people in poverty and exclusion has become weaker. We can also see this in the strange shift that is becoming increasingly visible: from poor to working poor. The government policy that is based on the principle that a paid job is the way out of poverty, has at least partly failed. The paid job leads from the rain in the drip, from poverty in a benefit to poverty in a poorly paid job. The only advantage of the job is that you come out of the social isolation.

We do not condemn the acquisition of a paid job, but we do argue that the slogan "work must pay" has become a farce for more and more people. Incidentally, with a growing trend. In a wealthy country, where more than 3,000 billion a year is passed through taxes through letterbox constructions, more and more people have to go to the food bank. The resemblance to the social weakness of the United States is becoming increasingly clear. And here too we see how large multinational, very often American, companies avoid profit tax thanks to special constructions. The small step that, furthermore, at the insistence of the European Parliament, the EU tries to take by levying a 3% tax on these profits, is rejected by a large part of the Council of Ministers or by the Member States.

European elections

2019 is also the year in which the European elections take place and in which the so-called Brexit plays an increasingly paralyzing role. At some point it seems as if that is the only thing the EU has ever been founded for: to let British conservatives play their games. This stepping out of the EU may be of great benefit to wealthy British people, but the large group of poor people in the UK is now completely lost. During the General Assembly to be held this year in Helsinki, EAPN will adopt a resolution that continues to recognize the UK EAPN as a member so that they can never be forced to leave our European network. Solidarity! EU elections Polls and forecasts show a very negative picture of the turnout and gains for nationalists and populists. That is, in addition to our belief in and investing in democracy, a good reason for EAPN NL to participate in the initiative of the European Parliament www.thistimeIvote.eu.

For months we ask everyone to vote on social media, during consultations, during working groups and otherwise. The turnout shows how good this initiative and all the small steps that many organizations have taken have been. Far above expectations. Fortunately, the profit of the populists and nationalists is disappointing. One of the activities that we have launched as EAPN Europe is a statement used by all national networks asking candidates for a seat in Parliament to declare that, if they are elected, they will participate in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. From this initiative, a working group of 38 European Parliamentarians will be convened by EAPN in October. Four of the signatories are Dutch and two of those are as it is called "Spitzenkandidat". One is the new vice-president of the European Commission Frans Timmermans (PvdA) and the other Bas Eickhout (GL), candidate for the European Greens.

We also participate in Europe Direct activities, including discussion meetings on the future agenda of the EU and a discussion afternoon with members and candidate members of the European Parliament in Roeselaere (B.). On all occasions we advocate a social agenda and an approach to rapidly increasing poverty. It is striking how few of the other participants take up these themes. How much work remains to be done.



National Reform Program

Like every year, we are, as a stakeholder, also invited to respond to the concept of the National Reform Program (NHP) in early 2019. Of course we are happy to respond to this invitation. In our response we draw attention to work as a way out of poverty and the associated increasing number of working poor, to poverty as such, whereby we bring in the European Minimum Income Network (EMIN), the coalition between EAPN, the European trade union and the university van Antwerp, which finds support in both the European Parliament and the European Commission. The aim is to achieve an adequate minimum income in all EU Member States. For the Netherlands, this means social assistance, survivors benefits and AOW (state pension) that match actual living costs. It is clear that this means an increase in these arrangements.

The problem of housing costs and finding an affordable home is also discussed. In addition, we appoint the maximum monthly rent, valid for the rent allowance, which has been frozen for 5 years at € 710 and will be increased by only € 10 as of January 1, 2019. The increasing problem of debt is the next topic.

Via EAPN Europe, where all responses from the various national networks are bundled, we as a network demand extra attention for many of these topics. There is also annual cooperation at European level to respond to the so-called “Country-Specific Recommendations” that the European Commission sends to the Member States.

Social Affairs and Employment

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is organizing a webinar on Debts, in which three experts by experience participate on behalf of EAPN NL. Participation is well prepared. Unfortunately, however, it turns out that this webinar is not intended to let people share their experiences, but to promote existing policies well prepared. A real disappointment for the experts. That is why we are preparing a response to this webinar that we will send to the Ministry and contribute to the G40. Some of the subjects are also on the agenda of the conversation with State Secretary Mrs. van Ark. When asked what we consider to be the most important subject, we call it affordable housing. Our concern is that more and more people can hardly afford their housing costs and that there is no affordable, decent housing.

The contacts with the ministry are pleasant and the conversations we have, the documents we bring in and the reactions, are appreciated. We therefore like to make regular use of this, such as in our letter in which we advocate not to change the Wajong (young disabled Act).

http://eapn.nl/assets/pdf/2019_brief_wijzigingsvoorstel_wajong_okt.pdf

As in other years, SA&E invites us to participate in the European Annual Convention of Inclusive Growth (ACIG). This conference, which will take place in Brussels, will focus on Member States' efforts to tackle poverty, improve the social dimension and find solutions and proposals. This is the last ACIG to lead by European Commissioner Marianne Thijssen, as a new Commission will be established in 2020, after the European elections. Looking back on 5 years of cooperation with Ms Thijssen, we can conclude that this Commissioner has opened the door far to enable the European Pillar of Social Rights, to maintain cooperation with EAPN and to keep poverty and exclusion on the European agenda. Thank you for that, especially for her time that she, also to EAPN NL, offered to speak to each other.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lymgETr9js>.

Workshops

This year we organize two workshops on poverty and a Round Table on homelessness among young people. During the three meetings and during conversations, discussions, participation in conferences, etc., a topic is always on our agenda: the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). This piece, signed in 2017 in Gothenburg (Zw.) by the heads of government of all EU member states, is the result of a lengthy cooperation process between many European non-governmental organizations, such as EAPN and its national networks, the European Parliament and the European Commission. It is a manifesto on the social rights of every EU citizen. This manifesto has yet to be "adopted" and converted into legislation by the Member States.

EAPN has as one of its European objectives that this manifesto be incorporated into the legislation by the Member States and recruits all national networks, such as EAPN NL, by increasing its publicity. The EPSR underlies the many activities of the European Minimum Income Network (EMIN), as one of the articles concerns an adequate minimum income.



We organize the first workshop together with the Oude Bieb Lewenborg Foundation in Groningen. The “Puzzle of Poverty”, as the workshop is called, is well attended and the attendees take full advantage of this opportunity to discuss and share their ideas and proposals. The foundation will work with the results and we will spread them as widely as possible.



Workshop two takes place in Brummen. Together with the foundation Onze DROOM, we organize the workshop “Becoming visible” on the World Poverty Day of the United Nations, 17th of October. Here too, there is a lot of interest in being able to talk and think, and the results are used by the foundation to contribute to local politics. EAPN NL will of course also distribute them further. During the workshop, those present are invited to step over the Poverty Line.

The picture below shows this action, with in the front row, in the middle, the mayor of Brummen, Alex van Hedel, who is a part of the workshop an active participant.

http://eapned.nl/assets/pdf/2019_verslag_workshop_zichtbaar_worden_brummen_17_okt.pdf



The Round Table Homelessness of young people was done in cooperation with Don Bosco Street Vision Amsterdam and U 2B Heard! Utrecht. The aim is to let (ex) homeless young people tell their story in order to gain insight into reasons why they only could get out of the hopeless situation with great difficulty and what should be done different. A very exciting afternoon, which delivers a lot. Here too, the results will be used by the organizations and EAPN NL will disseminate them. Among other things, we use this report to support the participation of a delegation of vulnerable young people, for whom this is not self-evident, in the European Youth Event which will take place in the European Parliament in May 2020. In addition to homeless and young people, we also want to invite young people with poverty experience, young people who are or are in danger of social isolation due to a disability and a small number of students who will work with these young people after their education is finalized. In order to participate, we need particularly strong financial support for which we will be recruiting.

Policy Weekend

The annual Policy Weekend takes place at the end of August, so that we can travel well prepared to the General Assembly of EAPN. First we look back on what has happened since the previous policy meeting and then what we want to do differently, what needs to be added and what we would like to work on. The latter is always a matter of manpower and financial resources. Looking back at what we have done, we are quite satisfied. Given the opportunities available as an organization that works without subventions and with only volunteers, a lot of work has been done again.

We also look at the division of tasks for European work and decide that the coordination of work around the annual European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty will be taken over by the President, while transferring her participation to EXCO. For the Inclusion Strategy Group, someone will be added and the newly started COMM'ON working group will be filled by two people, including a newcomer, who is already active as an expert in the group. A time-consuming, but also very interesting topic is the ongoing discussion within EAPN Europe about innovation. EAPN will be 30 years old in 2020 and it is good to see whether we are still on the right track, what needs to be adjusted, what has to be added and which principles still fit in with the changed time. This is an ongoing discussion. EAPN has been working on this in all its ranks over the past year, in addition to regular work, and decisions will be made during the General Assembly, which will take place in September in Helsinki. Another hot topic is the annual Poverty Watch that every national network has been making for three years now. In this we look at changes in government policy, austerity, innovation, and improvement of policies on poverty and social affairs. As EAPN NL, we also use this opportunity to explain how our social security system works. This is because we often receive questions about this from colleagues and because we get, that way, a clearer vision where the road in the Netherlands leads to. This certainly does not make you happier. More working poor, poverty not reduced, clear that minimum wages and minimum income are lacking further and further behind and that housing has almost become a prize in a lottery.

G40 Poverty & Debt working group

Thanks to the participation in the G40 (municipalities) "Poverty & Debt" working group, we are gaining more and more insight into the way in which municipalities deploy new and existing policies in such a way that the increasing number of people with a debt problem finds a low barrier with the municipalities. This is not easy and during the year the new regulations, changing legislation, outcomes of the initiatives literally keep pouring in.

We are doing our best by participating in the webinar Debts of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, after which we write and publish a reaction on this subject. We also draw attention to the European Pillar of Social Rights and reports on activities, such as our workshops.

Frisian Social Planning Bureau

At the end of 2018, we participated in a working meeting about poverty organized by the Frisian Social Planning Bureau. At the end of this year we are invited to participate in a discussion about tackling child poverty in Friesland. Of course we gladly accept that invitation. Even though we also see here how many activities are being undertaken to tackle child poverty, what is clear and what we are saying is that the income of the parent or parents is simply too low and that this is certainly a problem when long-term or even permanent out of paid work is happening. This goes with a great deal of respect for all those activities and projects. What we also advocate is to enter into a conversation with the children, young people and their parents to clarify where support can falter and can be improved.

Let's grow Groningen

Another conference we participate in takes place in Groningen. In addition to the introduction by Dr. Machteld Huber on health, the workshop is particularly interesting, where we discuss the opportunities and obstacles of people with disabilities within the circular economy. The discussion did not end that afternoon.

A group is being created, in which, in addition to EAPN NL, the Hub Haren and the Recovery Group Nederland are looking for opportunities for positive changes, to support people who are now at home because of their disability, their long absence from the labor market or their mental state to get a place on the regular labor market. Making this possible in an innovative way. Together with a number of companies that focus on the circular economy, we have written a letter to the State Secretary of SA&E asking for an experimental area for us to work within for these very specific target groups. The answer has not yet been received by the end of 2019. Who knows what 2020 will bring.

EAPN Europe work *COMM'ON*

Based on the Resolution of EAPN NL adopted by the General Assembly in Dublin 2017, the working group on participation and communication COMM'ON started at the end of 2018. The assignment is to develop targeted proposals and products that promote the participation of and communication on poverty and exclusion by experts by experience. This means that the outcomes can be directly converted by the networks into active (re) participation of people in poverty and social exclusion, so that they can contribute to discussions, policy development and bring forward proposals for change that should not be underestimated. Two people take part on behalf of EAPN NL, one of whom is a new experience expert, who, as a former member of a local client council and as an active participant in EAPN activities, has a good basis to guarantee input into this working group. That this is a good estimate is already apparent at the first meeting, where, among other things, a name is searched for this new group. Her proposal to name the working group COMM'ON, a combination of the words communication and the English word for come on, is immediately accepted. During 2019, this group is working on a guideline for participation, in which the mutual involvement is particularly striking. In addition, this is a group that really works together, because everyone supplies part of the concept product that is finalized by the end of the year, to be presented and discussed within the various forums of EAPN in 2020.

EXCO

Within the EXCO, in addition to normal administrative work, a lot of time is spent on policy development and adjustments within the structure in order to be prepared for the new European Commission to come up with a new program. The current Europe 2020 program is coming to an end, with one of the products being the European Pillar of Social Rights and the knowledge that the goal of lifting 20 million people out of poverty, partly due to the enormous impact of the banking crisis, will not be met. EAPN presents a policy document “Future of Europe”, to which we make a small contribution, and a working group is starting up to develop the approach to the enormous tax avoidance. We take a seat and write a first draft, which will be on the table of the Bureau at the end of the year. We will see how this will develop further in 2020. We will also join the group that will collect ideas to color the 30th anniversary in 2020.

EUISG

The EUISG, European Inclusion and Strategy group, meets 3 times a year in different places in Europe. In 2019, these took place in Riga, Brussels (simultaneously with the Policy Conference and the EXCO board meeting) and in Helsinki where the annual General Assembly of EAPN was also held. As every year, the European Semester cycle is on the agenda and the various National Reform Plans, Country Reports and Specific Recommendations are analyzed for the presence of attention to poverty and social exclusion. Reports on this are being distributed to the European Commission and at national level. In addition, attention was paid to the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), signed by all Member States in 2017. An action plan has established how to bring it to the attention of politicians and citizens in the Member States. It also discussed how Europe should move beyond 2020 and is preparing a 2030 agenda focusing on reducing poverty and social exclusion by setting goals for sustainable and inclusive growth that benefit people and the planet. A lot of work is also done on a document on education, resulting in a paper on education, training, the lifelong learning principle and their implications for poverty and social exclusion. This paper is offered to members, politicians and cooperation partners of the different networks. Furthermore, the European Parliamentary elections have been closely monitored and the "Gender Equality" working group has published the report "Gender and Violence". The EUISG group members map their national situation in relation to poverty and social exclusion in the Poverty Watch 2019. By paying attention in the EUISG to the way in which the EAPN does this in the 'Strategic review', we are working on a resilient network that will continue to function optimally after 2020. The exchange of knowledge and experiences from different countries on all kinds of topics related to poverty and social exclusion means that the EUISG provides a broad European view of topics to stakeholders. We prepared and submitted the Dutch annual Poverty Watch. In addition, the implementation of the Theory of Change (Strategic Review) was implemented throughout the year.

Annual Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

In November, the annual 'Poverty Summit' takes place in Brussels, which EAPN organizes in cooperation with the European Commission. Coordination will be done by the chairperson of EAPN NL. Preparations start in the spring. Then all kinds of discussions will take place with the organizations present in the network about participation in the EAPN NL delegation. This year a representative of Inclusion Netherlands, a board member of the Onze DROOM foundation and a young expert by experience. Unfortunately, it is not possible to have the (ex) homeless youngster in the delegation. During three meetings, for which we are allowed to use a beautiful space in Almere, where an ex-experience expert has her company, we are working on a solid contribution from EAPN NL.

The topic of the conference is how to influence the new EU social agenda, which the new Commission will prepare. The presence of the new Commissioner Nicolas Schmit shows how important the Commission considers this conference to be.

This year, too, we will be making a video of this important European conference, where the poor and the excluded will talk to each other, to officials of the European Commission, to representatives of various organizations and to members of the European Parliament. There is also a represent of our ministry of SA&E taking part.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6q484_QFW8

Civic Society EU

At the end of October we will participate in the conference "Strengthening the involvement of civil society in the European Semester" organized by the European Commission. During this conference, two issues require very explicit attention. One is the changing civil society, in which the organizations created by the people themselves take an increasingly growing place and the fact that client participation is on the decline in the Netherlands. Where we once led the way, we are now behind when it comes to the participation of experts by experience in the local social domain. This applies once again to client participation in social services and job agencies.

Mobility Mentoring

The importance of processes such as Mobility Mentoring is demonstrated by the fact that our colleagues from Portugal take the trouble to come to Alphen aan den Rijn to obtain information about the project. The mayor of one of the cities where EAPN Portugal has built and supervises a local poor council has contacted the municipality and arranged the visit. An ideal time to also take time to discuss the issues of debt and exclusion with our colleagues.

Erasmus +

Because we believe that people in a position where they are virtually excluded due to other deficiencies in addition to financial poverty, still have a right on education. Therefore there has to be a constant looking for change, for innovation. For this reason, we decide to attend information meetings of the National Agency for Erasmus + and to apply to participate in one of the Transnational Cooperation Activities. This will take place at the end of the year in the beautiful castle Alden Biezen (B.), a stone's throw from Maastricht. The meeting is led by the Belgian agency and there are representatives from 18 countries. For four days we work informing each other about our work, our idea for a project, we get to know each other and we are informed about all kinds of projects. Exciting and rich in information and experiences. At the end of 2019 we decide to look for partners to submit an Erasmus + project in 2020. Exciting. One of the reasons for doing this is that we have come across several projects in recent years. This is also the case this year, where we participate with two people in the conference of the FILO -Fighting Against Loneliness- project, which will take place in Albeda College in Rotterdam. It's great to see people working in many places across the EU to tackle and prevent the loneliness our societies are facing. In particular, because the innovative approach will play a role in the education offered by Albeda College to their students social work.

Summary

We have worked, organized, written, co-written, co-contributed, participated and discussed as much as we could handle. Always based on two thoughts, which we also put into practice

1. give space for the input of the people themselves
2. draw attention to the special position of experience by experts. Whether it is poverty, exclusion, a disability or a limitation or living as working poor, everyone has the right to be heard, to participate and to be part, regardless of age, sexe or education.



It is good to see and hear how the mayor of Brummen expresses his appreciation for the work of Onze DROOM. Or how we value our work, because people with whom we work or have worked can step out of poverty. No matter how small our input seems to be, it is appreciated. It is a pity that we still cannot afford our own office and a small - paid - staff. We continue to assume that this will also succeed in the near future, because with this we can contribute even more to that better society than we already do. Ultimately, that is the motivation for our work and for society: the hope that it will get better! That all pieces of the puzzle come together and form a beautiful picture.

In short, together we will give substance to the true meaning of the words

Living together

Ulicoten, May 2020

www.eapnned.nl

www.emin-eu.net