ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

25th February 2021

CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

During this year, despite the Coronavirus pandemic, the Executive Committee strived hard to continue with the Forum’s mission to fight against poverty and social exclusion by raising awareness on various issues of poverty through a number of media interviews, radio programmes, press statements and also through the organisation of the annual conference. We worked on several reports requested by EAPN including the Poverty Watch report and also organised Focus Groups with the National Audit Office to discuss statistics issued by the National Statistics Office on poverty.

During 2020, APF Malta held 10 Executive Committee meetings and 1 Annual Conference. Most meetings were held online, including the annual conference. Online meetings were made easy as APF Malta secured a free zoom account from EAPN for the duration of the pandemic.

During the ExCo meetings many issues were discussed and acted upon, which will be briefly outlined in the report below.

- New members

During 2020, two organisations, namely YMCA and Segretarjat Assistenza Socjali, contacted the Forum, asking to become members. The Forum discussed the organisations’ statutes and later held separate meetings with the organisations’ management. The Executive Committee agreed that both organisations should become members commencing from this year’s Annual General Meeting, and their representatives are today present for this meeting. To this extent, Anti-Poverty Forum Malta is now a Forum of 15 local organisations.
• Local issues tackled during 2020

Following the last Annual General Meeting, members were asked to send topics which they wish APF Malta will discuss. The below summarizes the feedback received and action taken.

**COVID-19 and its effects on people experiencing poverty**

APF Malta prepared a memo which was sent to Hon. Minister Michael Falzon on 25th March 2020. The memo highlighted 12 points which the government could urgently work upon to ease the burden of the pandemic on people in poverty. APF Malta asked for an online meeting with the Minister to further discuss these proposals. Unfortunately no feedback was received. Later, the memo was modified and sent as a press release in April 2020. Various media organisations reported APF Malta’s proposals and we were also invited for a Sunday newspaper interview.

In September 2020, APF Malta held an online informal talk with Ms Graciela Malgesini, author of EAPN’s report - The impact of Covid-19 on people experiencing poverty and vulnerability. For this meeting APF Malta members were invited to attend.

**Living income**

Following the Government’s proposal on introducing the living income in Malta, ExCo agreed that APF Malta should issue a press statement showing our support to this initiative and at the same time explain the various terms being used. APF Malta issued the press statement on 25th September 2020 and received very good feedback from local news organisations.

APF Malta also held its’ annual conference on the Living Income to raise more awareness on this matter.

**Immigration**

*Is it enough to receive E.U. funds to solve the problem? What are the causes of migration? Who is responsible for it? What is the long term solution?*

APF Malta sent a statement to EAPN colleagues on people stranded at sea and asked for their support to push forward this issue and the migrants’ rights to EAPN and eventually the European Commission. APF Malta received very good feedback from Italy, Greece, Germany, Denmark and Finland. However it is clear that EAPN did not do any effort to push forward this statement.

APF Malta also endorsed a number of statements on migrants issued by Aditus Foundation throughout 2020.

**Minimum Income**

This point was delved into and discussed with the living wage.
Political and Judicial systems
An informal online talk was held with lawyer Dr Kurt Xerri focusing more on affordable housing and legal issues with regards to land use

• Press statements
Throughout 2020 APF Malta issued the following Press Statements:

31st January 2020 – Deportation of non-EU children - Identity Malta had refused a residence permit to 22 children whose parents worked in Malta, saying that granting them a residence permit would put them at risk of living in poverty. The Government of Malta supported this decision. APF Malta issued a statement emphasising that separating the children from their biological parents is a breach of Article 9 of UNHCR.

3rd April 2020 – Food and Shelter Emergency Initiative - issued by Aditus foundation and endorsed by APF Malta

19th April 2020 – Covid-19 and its’ effects on people experiencing poverty and social exclusion – A press release was issued with a number of proposals and a way forward to assist the vulnerable during the pandemic. This was originally sent to Minister Michael Falzon and later released to the press.

21st May 2020 – Migrants stranded out at Sea – Press Statement issued by Aditus Foundation and endorsed by APF Malta

25th September 2020 – Living Income – A Press Statement was issued supporting the Government’s proposal to introduce a living income scheme in Malta and also to highlight the difference in the terminology used.

• As Chairperson of the Forum, I attended the EAPN Executive Committee meetings, held online, during which a number of issues were discussed. During 2020 the main issues discussed by EAPN included Covid-19 and its’ effects on poverty and the vulnerable, the EAPN’s Director sabbatical year and the financing of the European Network.

• APF Malta ExCo held a meeting with MEP Hon. Dr. Josanne Cutajar in January 2020. This was a very fruitful meeting which concluded that whilst giving importance to the economy it is also essential to put emphasis on the social economy.

• Fr Ivan Attard is now representing APF Malta on the Civil Society Committee within the MCESD, after an election was held in February 2020. All MCESD meetings following the election were held online. APF Malta would like to thank Fr Edgar Busuttil for his serling work whilst representing the Forum in the past two years.
• In August 2020, APF Malta participated in a stakeholder consultation meeting on Malta’s Partnership Agreement and Programmes for the 2021-2027 period. The meeting focused on the funding received by the EU with regards to Gozo. During this meeting, APF pointed out that whilst it is important to focus on the economy, Malta should also give due importance to the social aspect of society as poverty is on the increase and this brings with it further social problems.

• The EAPN General Assembly was held on Friday 25th September 2020 for which APF Malta was represented by Chairperson Noel Xerri, Secretary Andre Bonello and Administrative Officer Cynthia Grixti. This General Assembly was held online.

• The European Commission in Malta organised a webinar on Tuesday 6th October to discuss the action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. APF Malta was invited to address those present by discussing minimum income.

• APF Malta held its’ annual conference on the 19th of November focusing on the Living Income. The main speakers were members Andre Bonello and Fr Ivan Attard, and Malta Employers Association General Director Mr Joe Farrugia. The conference was held online and was well-attended. Following the conference, APF Malta had very good media coverage and was invited on various radio and television programmes.

• During 2020, APF Malta continued with its’ presence on local radio programmes. From January to March 2020, APF Malta had a regular one-hour programme on Radju Malta. Unfortunately these were eventually stopped due to the pandemic. Later, from October to December 2020, APF Malta had a monthly 30 minute radio interview on Radju Marija. APF Malta is now in discussion with producers to have a regular television interview slot on F Living.

• APF Malta was asked by EAPN to compile a poverty watch for Malta. Andre Bonello, as EUISG representative, compiled this poverty watch and gave a short overview on the document he presented. Mr Bonello then gave a presentation to the Executive Committee on the report he compiled.

• The Commission for Justice and Peace within the Archdiocese of Malta issued a document titled ‘Beyond GDP’. On the 27th of November 2020, APF Malta held a meeting with representatives of this Commission and officials from EY and Seed Consultancy – the two companies that conducted the research study. During this meeting, a short presentation on the document was given. APF Malta will be forwarding its’ thoughts and recommendations to the Commission, whilst the Commission will seek ways to work more closely with APF Malta in the future.
• APF Malta joined other NGOs in discussion with the Government with regards to proposed changes in the Special Residence Authorisation Policy. Meetings about this started in November 2020 and are still ongoing.

• In December 2020, APF Malta was approached by the Pension Strategy Group within MSFC. As stipulated by Article 64B of the Social Security Act the Pension Strategy Group had by the end of 2020 to present a strategic report on the solidarity, adequacy and sustainability of the pension system. The report was tabled at the House of Representatives on 15th December 2020. A consultation process is now ongoing till 30th March 2021. As part of the consultation process the Pension Strategy Group held a meeting with APF Malta Executive Committee. The Forum in return prepared a feedback document which will be sent to the authorities in the coming days.

• APF Malta forwarded all the necessary documents to the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Sector to be compliant with the Voluntary Organisations Act. A formal communication noted that APF Malta is now compliant up to 2019.