



2025 – 2028 EAPN Strategic Plan

2024-2025



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Strategic Planning Paper is part of two-years consultation process led by the External Consultant Hans Wouters with the different instances of EAPN network, including governance bodies, internal Working Groups, Delegates of People Experiencing Poverty (PeP) and EAPN staff members. It was drafted by Jessica Machacova (Senior Policy & Advocacy Officer) and by Kahina Rabahi (Policy & Advocacy Coordinator) under the coordination of Juliana Santos Wahlgren (Director).

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1. Foreword & Policy Context

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) launches its Strategic Plan for 2025–2028 at a time of major social, economic and political change. Across Europe, people continue to face rising living costs, housing insecurity, unequal access to essential services and growing uncertainty linked to the green and digital transitions, demographic change and geopolitical instability. These challenges disproportionately affect people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Despite Europe being considered wealthy, millions of people across Europe continue to experience poverty and social exclusion. Poverty remains a structural challenge that cannot be addressed through temporary measures or crisis responses alone. It requires long-term political commitment, strong social protection systems, adequate incomes, quality public services, affordable housing and meaningful participation of people experiencing poverty in decisions that affect their lives.

This Strategic Plan sets out how EAPN will contribute to that ambition over the period 2025–2028. It provides a common direction for the Network and defines the priorities that will guide our work over the coming years. It also reflects EAPN's commitment to strengthening its impact as the leading European network working to eradicate poverty and social exclusion.

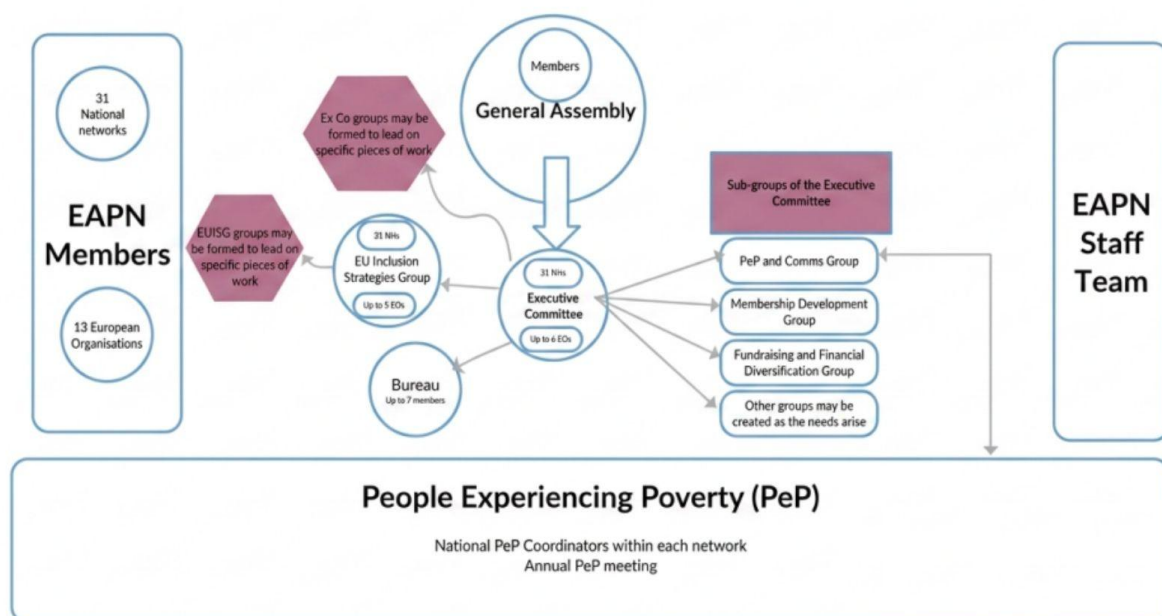
The Strategy is built around four complementary areas of work. First, EAPN will reinforce its policy work to inform European and national decision-making, promote rights-based social policies and hold institutions accountable for delivering on their commitments. Second, the Network will strengthen its communications to make poverty visible, amplify the voices of people experiencing poverty and shape public debate through accessible, evidence-based and values-driven messaging. Third, EAPN will invest in community engagement by expanding meaningful participation, supporting mutual learning across the Network and ensuring that people with lived experience continue to shape both our priorities and our actions. Finally, the Strategy seeks to strengthen EAPN itself by investing in membership development, organisational sustainability, governance and capacity-building, ensuring that the Network remains representative, resilient and equipped to respond to emerging challenges.

This Strategic Plan is both a roadmap for action and a framework for accountability. It establishes clear priorities while allowing the flexibility needed to respond to an evolving political and social context. Above all, it reaffirms EAPN's mission: to work together with its members, partners and people experiencing poverty to build a Europe where everyone can live with dignity and where poverty is no longer accepted as inevitable.

2. About EAPN

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) was established in 1990 and is the largest European network of organisations working to eradicate poverty and social exclusion. It brings together national, regional and local anti-poverty organisations, as well as European Organisations (EOs) working in areas such as housing, social rights, health, equality and inclusion.

For more than 35 years, EAPN has worked to ensure that the voices of people experiencing poverty are heard in European and national policymaking. The Network combines advocacy, research, participation and capacity-building to influence policies, strengthen civil society and promote social justice across Europe.



EAPN's governance structure ensures that the Network's strategic priorities are translated into coordinated action. Through the General Assembly, Executive Committee, Bureau, Secretariat and thematic working groups, members participate in setting the Network's direction, monitoring progress and adapting priorities as the political context evolves.

EAPN is built on two complementary pillars.

- **National Networks** bring together organisations working directly with people experiencing poverty in EU Member States and enlargement countries. They provide first-hand knowledge of the realities people face and contribute national expertise to EAPN's European advocacy.

- **European Organisations (EOs)** contribute specialised expertise on issues such as housing, disability, children's rights, health, employment, migration, gender equality and other areas linked to poverty and social exclusion. Together with the National Networks, they strengthen EAPN's capacity to develop evidence-based policy positions and coordinated advocacy.

The strength of EAPN lies in this combination of local experience and European action. The Network connects what happens in communities across Europe with policy discussions at EU level, ensuring that its work reflects the realities of people experiencing poverty. Participation is a core principle of EAPN's approach: people with lived experience of poverty contribute to shaping the Network's priorities, policy positions and advocacy activities.

Through this broad membership, EAPN acts as a platform for collaboration, mutual learning and collective action. By bringing together diverse organisations around a shared mission, the Network is able to influence European policies while supporting members in their efforts to promote social rights and eradicate poverty at national, regional and local levels.

3. Vision, Mission and Core Principles

3.1 Our Vision

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

This vision assumes that environmental, economic and social sustainability cannot be separated. A sustainable Europe must be an equal Europe; any green or digital transition that leaves the most vulnerable segments of society behind is a failure of social sustainability.

3.2 Our Mission

To drive this vision into reality, EAPN operates under a threefold statutory mission:

- **To promote and enhance the effectiveness of actions** to eradicate poverty and prevent social exclusion across all governance levels.
- **To raise public and political awareness** regarding the structural nature of poverty, shifting the discourse away from individual blame toward systemic solutions.
- **To empower the people living in poverty and social exclusion**, ensuring they act as central, autonomous agents in the design, implementation, and evaluation of social policy.

3.3 Main Systemic Changes Required

EAPN has identified six fundamental systemic transformations required to achieve its vision. These pillars guide all policy, communication and membership targets within this plan:

1. **Cultivating Grassroots Public Support:** Building broad, visible, and unyielding public backing across Europe for rights-based social policies and poverty eradication.
2. **Deepening Participatory Democracy:** Institutionalizing dedicated, safe, and influential spaces where People Experiencing Poverty (PEP) contribute directly to legislative design.
3. **Enforcing Political Accountability:** Creating rigorous monitoring mechanisms to hold European and national authorities accountable to their public pledges on poverty reduction.

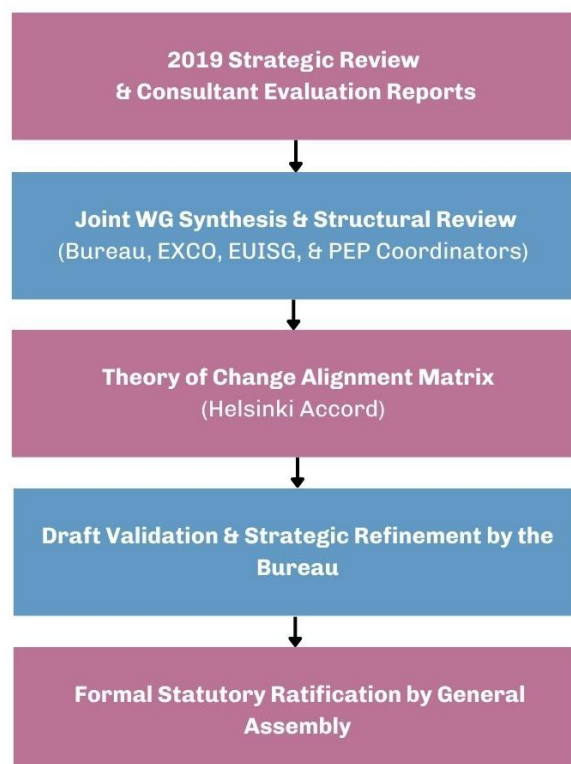
4. **Reversing Macroeconomic Austerity:** Advocating for public finance models that prioritize social investment, high-quality public services, and universal access to healthcare, education, and social housing.
5. **Securing Robust Social Protection:** Campaigning for the implementation of legally binding, adequate Minimum Income schemes and dignified living wages across all European states, aligned with local living costs.
6. **Future-Proofing Against Systemic Shocks:** Ensuring that public policy shields low-income and marginalized communities from the disproportionate shocks of economic transitions, climate variations, and digital exclusion.

4. Strategic Methodology & Operational Approach

This Strategic Plan is the product of an exhaustive, participatory review process aimed at strengthening EAPN's organisational agility and work impact. The methodological foundation builds directly upon the historic outcomes of the 2019 Strategic Review and the subsequent evaluation titled "*Towards a Stronger EAPN*," conducted by institutional expert Hans Wolters.

The operational approach utilized to construct this strategy was strictly consultative, breaking down traditional hierarchies within the network to achieve consensus. Following a critical review session in Porto, a dedicated, representative Working Group was formed, drawing expertise from across the Bureau, the Executive Committee, the EU Inclusion Strategies Group and PEP National Coordinators.

Consultative Design Flowchart

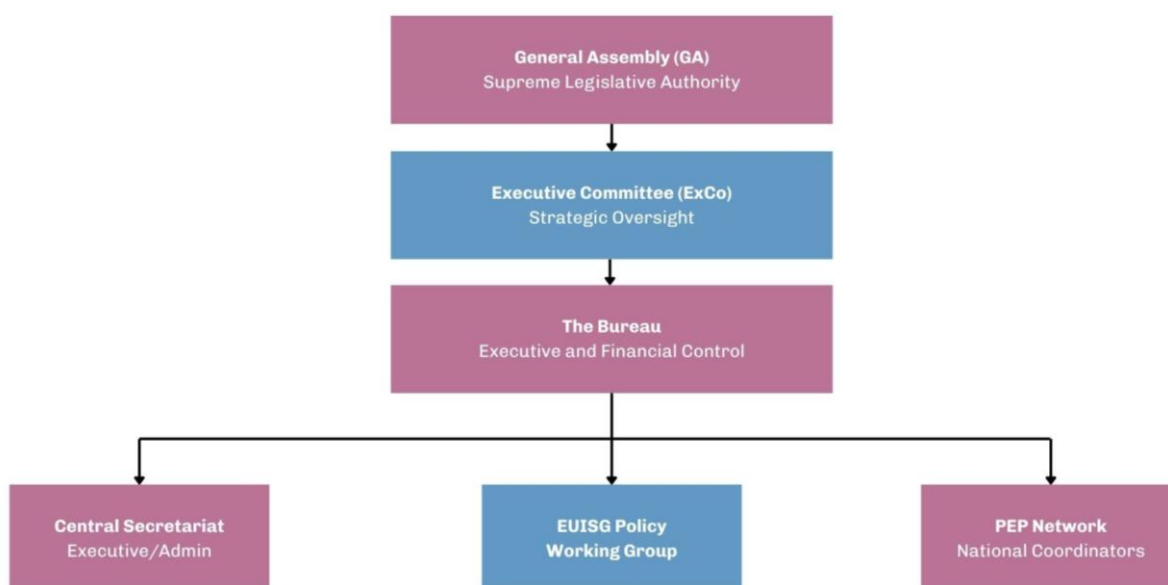


The Working Group cross-referenced all structural and procedural recommendations with EAPN's core Theory of Change framework, which was originally ratified at the Helsinki General Assembly. Every operational objective within this plan was evaluated against practical baselines, expected impacts, and precise indicators of success. The draft strategy underwent scrutiny by the Bureau to verify administrative and financial viability, followed by strategic evaluation by the EXCO, culminating in formal structural review and ratification by the General Assembly (GA). This rigorous method guarantees that the final strategic plan carries a full democratic mandate from the entire network.

5. EAPN Governance Architecture

To deliver on its strategic promises, EAPN must operate with an efficient, transparent and legally sound governance structure. The 2026–2030 cycle introduces governance adjustments designed to clarify responsibilities, mitigate institutional risks, and distribute tasks effectively across statutory and consultative bodies.

5.1 Statutory Governing Bodies & Consultative Structures



- **General Assembly (GA):** As the supreme legislative and decision-making organ of EAPN, the GA retains final authority over institutional statutes, annual budgets, multi-annual planning, and the official political positioning of the network.
- **Executive Committee (EXCO):** Composed of representatives from national networks and European Organisations, the EXCO is responsible for setting overarching policy priorities, supervising strategic execution, and reviewing proposals submitted by the Bureau.
- **The Bureau:** A streamlined executive body elected from the EXCO, tasked with direct financial oversight, administrative supervision of the Secretariat, preparation of high-level statutory documents, and immediate crisis management.
- **Consultative Organs:** These specialised bodies drive EAPN's core activities. They include the **EU Inclusion Strategies Group (EUISG)** for policy analysis, the **PEP National Coordinators** for participatory advocacy, the **Membership**

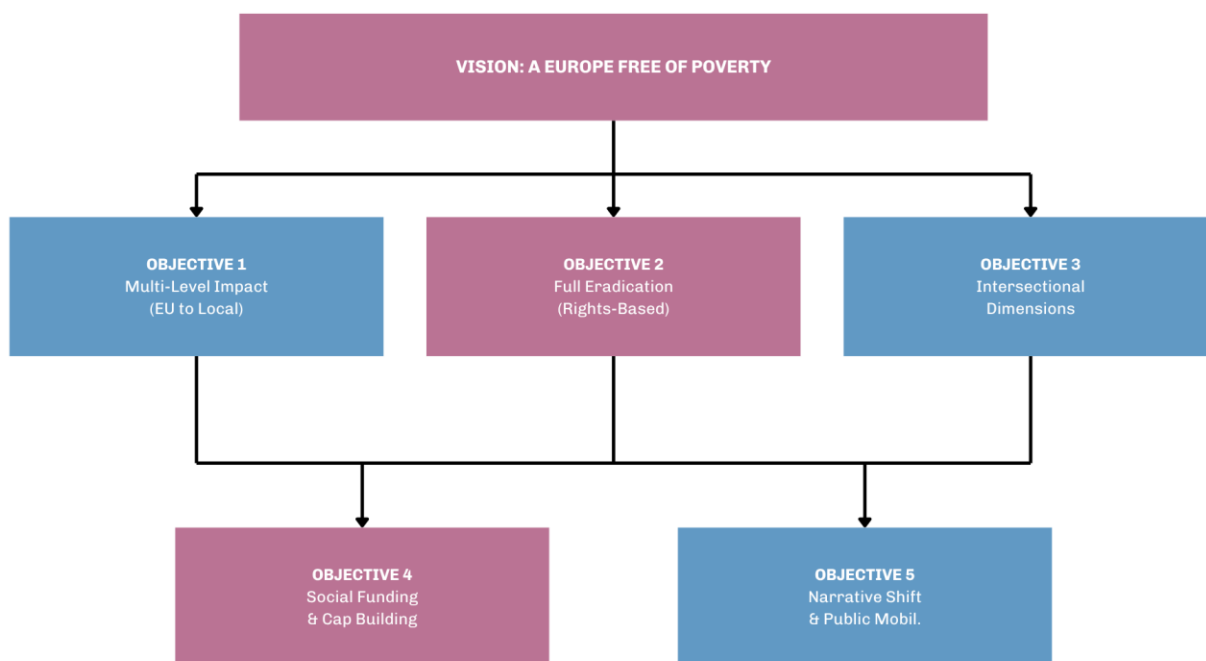
Development Group (MDG) for network health, and the **Communications Committee (Comm'On)** for public narrative strategy.

5.2 Governance Objectives & Proposed Reforms (2025–2028)

- **Codification of an Institutional Terms of Reference (ToR) Manual:** EAPN will draft and implement a single, unified institutional manual that explicitly details the authority, voting procedures, and collaborative boundaries of the GA, EXCO, Bureau, EUISG, and PEP networks. This will eliminate operational overlaps and ensure strict compliance with the updated 2024 Statutes.
- **Strategic Repositioning of the EXCO:** To maximize governance efficiency, routine administrative work and preliminary draft reviews will be entirely managed by the Bureau. This allows the EXCO to focus on high-level strategic debates, political alignment, and cross-border solidarity.
- **Structural Evaluation of Bureau Expansion:** EAPN will assess a statutory expansion of the Bureau from 7 to 9 members. This modification aims to guarantee balanced geographical representation (East, West, North, South) while creating dedicated advisory seats for an EUISG policy representative and an active PEP delegate.
- **Enforcement of a Clear Institutional Code of Conduct:** EAPN will implement updated meeting regulations that mandate timekeeping, balanced speaker allocations between national networks and European Organisations, and explicit protocols for managing conflicts of interest. The network will also establish an independent, secure whistleblower system to protect institutional integrity.

6. Strategic Objectives (2025–2028)

The core operations of EAPN over the years are anchored in five interlinked Strategic Objectives. These objectives translate our overarching vision into institutional actions across the European Union.



- **Objective 1: Enhancing the Impact of the EAPN Network at EU, National, and Local Levels**

EAPN will strengthen its vertical integration. We will ensure that local, grassroots insights on social exclusion directly inform EU-level policy initiatives, while simultaneously building the capacity of national networks to effectively monitor and influence how EU social directives are implemented domestically.

- **Objective 2: Fighting for the Full Eradication of Poverty**

EAPN will continue to produce knowledge to support and inform European legislative frameworks towards comprehensive, rights-based strategies focused to the eradication of poverty. This includes working towards legally binding European frameworks on Minimum Income and social security.

- **Objective 3: Addressing Poverty in All Its Dimensions**

Recognising that poverty is rarely isolated, EAPN will utilise intersectional analytical models. All policy statements, research publications and campaigns will integrate political, social, cultural and economic rights, explicitly addressing how poverty intersects with gender, ethnicity, age, disability and legal status.

- **Objective 4: Funding Anti-Poverty Measures**

EAPN will advocate for ambitious, ring-fenced fiscal allocations for social inclusion within national public budgets and European financial frameworks (such as the MFF). Concurrently, the network will equip national and local members with the technical knowledge needed to access and manage European funds, including CERV, Horizon Europe and Erasmus+.

- **Objective 5: Changing the Narrative for Wider Mobilisation**

EAPN will systematically counter the stigmatisation, individual stereotyping and political blame frequently directed at people experiencing poverty. By producing rigorous, evidence-based research, EAPN will construct alternative public narratives that frame poverty eradication as a collective public responsibility and an economic benefit for Europe as a whole.

7. Pillar-Specific Implementation Plans

7.1 Policy Expertise and Framework

- **Institutional Alignment of Policy and Governance:** The EUISG’s policy formulation workflows will be realigned to support the immediate needs of the Bureau and EXCO. All major statutory meetings and high-level institutional dialogues will be preceded by operational policy briefs, ensuring EAPN leadership advances unified, data-driven arguments.
- **Flexible Policy Mobilisation:** The internal structure of the EUISG will be reorganized into agile, thematic sub-working groups (e.g., focused on minimum income, energy poverty, or housing). These groups can be quickly deployed to draft rapid-response positions on emerging EU legislative initiatives and public consultations.
- **Strategic Coalition and Mandate Management:** EAPN will formalise and strengthen its working relationships with key European networks, notably FEANTSA and the Civil Society Europe, among other EU networks on social rights, anti-discrimination issues and economic justice. In doing so, EAPN will establish clear cooperative boundaries to manage overlapping mandates effectively—particularly regarding employment and social affairs—to present a unified civil society front to the European institutions.

7.2 Communication & Narrative Transformation

- **Bidirectional Information Systems:** EAPN will replace traditional top-down communication with an integrated information network. The Central Secretariat will provide members with clear, actionable analysis of EU developments, while national networks will systematically supply the Secretariat with localised data, national case studies, and grassroots impact reports.
- **Digital Modernisation and Linguistic Accessibility:** To mitigate persistent human resource constraints, EAPN will invest in modern digital administrative technologies and secure artificial intelligence tools. These systems will automate high-quality, multi-lingual translations of core statutory and policy documents, improving network cohesion and ensuring linguistic inclusivity for all members.
- **Targeted Public and Institutional Campaigns:** Supported by the Communications Group (Comm'On), EAPN will launch evidence-led public campaigns. These initiatives will focus on transforming public perception regarding social protection, shifting the narrative toward a rights-based framework and expanding civic support for comprehensive EU social inclusion measures.

7.3 Community Engagement & The PEP Network

- **Formal Institutionalisation of PEP Structures:** EAPN will officially codify the PEP National Coordinators as a formal, legally recognised advisory pillar within the internal governance architecture. This structural reform guarantees that PEP coordinates operate with institutional weight, rather than on an ad-hoc basis.
- **Sustained and Direct Governance Representation:** The network will establish a clear, structured steering committee for PEP national coordinators that interfaces directly with the Bureau and EXCO. To support this integration, EAPN holds PeP Coordination meetings monthly online.
- **Capacity Building, Training and Sustainable Mandates:** EAPN will develop specialised onboarding toolkits, public speaking modules and policy training materials tailored for PEP delegates. Furthermore, the official mandates for PEP delegations will be extended to a four-year term, providing the institutional continuity and confidence necessary to influence EAPN's policy directions.

7.4 Membership Development & Network Cohesion

- **Comprehensive Human Capital and Skills Inventory:** EAPN will conduct a thorough, network-wide capacity audit across all EXCO members, EUISG policy experts and PEP coordinators. This initiative will map specialised thematic knowledge and advocacy strengths across Europe, creating an internal database to foster peer-to-peer support.
- **Targeted Interventions for Network Revitalisation:** The Membership Development Group (MDG) will plan peer-support missions, thematic training seminars and study visits to assist under-resourced or developing national networks. Priority will be given to organisations operating in countries slated for the rotating EU Presidency, ensuring they are prepared to engage with their national governments.
- **Operational Standardisation and Practical Support Toolkits:** EAPN will update its internal operations manual with practical resource mobilisation guides, diversified fundraising toolkits, standard governance checklists and strategic planning models. This operational support will help national secretariats improve their domestic administrative efficiency and long-term financial stability.

8. Secretariat Operationalisation & Financial Resource Management

8.1 Secretariat Workflows & Human Resources

- **Operational Boundary Clarification:** EAPN will enforce a clear separation between the political and strategic decision-making mandates of the elected governance bodies (GA, EXCO, Bureau) and the daily executive responsibilities of the Secretariat staff. This guarantees that the Secretariat can execute tasks with operational autonomy under the leadership of the Director.
- **Transparent and Accountable Recruitment Frameworks:** To strengthen employment accountability and build internal trust, all future technical and senior recruitment processes within the Secretariat will feature joint selection panels, including designated Bureau members.
- **Administrative Support Optimisation:** The Director's operational role will be updated to accelerate executive decision-making within approved budgetary limits. To ensure sustainability, this will be supported by clarified job descriptions, structured administrative backup systems, and dedicated resource development functions.

8.2 Budgetary Procedures & Financial Sustainability

- **Exhaustive Fiscal Cost-Benefit Analysis:** The Central Secretariat, working closely with the Bureau Treasurer, will conduct a detailed financial and operational analysis of all strategic planning proposals before they are submitted for budget inclusion. This process ensures that every proposed action is backed by a realistic funding plan.
- **Structured, Legally Sound Financial Decision-Making:** The General Assembly—supported by preliminary evaluations from the Bureau and EXCO—will ensure that all strategic resolutions are aligned with financial realities. This mechanism ensures that the network's resources are systematically directed toward the core operational priorities outlined in this five-year plan.

9. Conclusion

The 2025–2028 Strategic Plan provides the European Anti-Poverty Network with an operational roadmap to transform its high-level vision into institutional impact. At a time when European social cohesion faces complex economic, environmental and structural challenges, the existence of a coordinated, agile and clear civil society voice is essential. This document establishes the internal reforms, governance adaptations, and strategic objectives required to ensure EAPN fulfills that role with accountability and purpose.

Core Restructuring Targets

GOVERNANCE	OPERATIONS
- Single, Codified GA Manual - Streamlined EXCO Strategy - Bureau Geographic Rebalance	- Skills Audit & Capacity Mapping - Automated Multilingual Toolkits - Unified Inlet Recruitment Panels
POLICY	COMMUNITY
- Vertical Income Briefings - Flexible EUISG Sub-Groups - Strategic Coalition Frameworks	- Institutionalised PEP Structure - 4-Year Sustained PEP Mandates - Cost Optimised Regional Fora

Through the systemic updates detailed in this plan—ranging from the institutionalisation of the People Experiencing Poverty (PEP) structures to the modernisation of our policy working groups—EAPN is refining its internal workflows to better meet external challenges. By establishing precise operational boundaries, separating strategic governance from executive management and implementing rigorous cost-benefit analyses within our budgeting, we ensure that our resources are directly focused on systemic change.

Ultimately, the structural changes detailed in this plan are designed to achieve one central goal: maximizing our impact at European, national and local levels. By protecting the space for participatory democracy, delivering evidence-based social policy analysis and challenging the public narrative surrounding social exclusion, EAPN remains dedicated to its founding mission. We present this Strategic Plan to the European Commission, our institutional partners and our member networks as an accountable blueprint for a sustainable, fairer Europe free from poverty.



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