



**DRAFT**  
**Annual Report 2014**  
**Presented to AGM 2015**



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# 1. Influencing Policy on Poverty

The central mission of EAPN Ireland is to promote policies against poverty at national and European level.

As far as possible, this means involving local and national members in policy formation, advocacy and monitoring and working with broad alliances in Ireland and across Europe.

Policy work is facilitated within the staff by Paul Ginnell, who develops policy papers, supports advocacy and builds alliances for change. Paul is the Irish representative on the EU Inclusion Policy Group of EAPN Europe, which he co-chairs.

In Ireland, much of our policy work is coordinated through the EAPN Policy Group on Europe 2020. The Europe 2020 Strategy is the main EU economic, social and environmental strategy for the years 2010 to 2020. Within this Strategy, the Platform Against Poverty provides the overall direction, specific targets and policy coordination to fight poverty across the EU.

Our information work through social media and e-mail NewsFlash provide information for members across a wide range of policy areas.

In 2014, EAPN Ireland also brought together two coalitions in Ireland as part of Europe-wide alliances. These are the European Minimum Income Network and the Better Europe Alliance, both described on subsequent pages.

## **The EAPN Ireland Policy group on Europe 2020**

This group is made up of representatives of: Age Action Ireland; Congress Centres Network; Disability Federation of Ireland; EAPN Ireland; Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed; Irish Traveller Movement; Migrant Rights Centre Ireland; National Adult Literacy Agency; National Youth Council of Ireland; National Women's Council of Ireland; One Family; Simon Communities of Ireland; SIPTU.

This group developed policy positions and prepared submissions on two key elements of the Europe 2020 Strategy:

- The Irish National Social Report
- The Irish National Reform Programme.

The Group also wrote to the Department of Social Protection on concerns about *Jobpath*.

## **EU Annual Convention on the Platform Against Poverty, Brussels**

Paul Ginnell represented EAPN Ireland at the Convention which again highlighted the failure to prevent or reduce address across the EU. However, getting people into jobs is still the main solution being discussed although the quality of jobs is now a bigger issue.

## **Budget 2015**

EAPN Ireland presented proposals for Budget 2015 to the Department of Social Protection's Pre-Budget Forum in Dublin Castle. Included in its submission are proposals to increase social welfare levels to better meet the actual cost of living and to improve the process of poverty proofing policies before they are finalised.

## **Financial Transaction Tax:**

EAPN Ireland is part of a coalition of social, environmental and development NGOs working for the introduction of a Financial Transaction Tax.

## 2. Influencing Europe 2020 – the Better Europe Alliance

EAPN Ireland was one of the three groups across Europe to pilot the development of an alliance of social and environmental NGOs and trade unions to influence the Europe 2020 Strategy and the broader 'European Semester'.

The *Better Europe* Alliance, is made up of ten organisations: Age and Opportunity; Disability Federation of Ireland; Environmental Pillar; EAPN Ireland; Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed; National Adult Literacy Agency; National Association of Building Cooperatives; National Women's Council of Ireland; SIPTU; Social Justice Ireland.

The Alliance built up contacts with the main bodies responsible for the European Semester in Ireland, the Department of the Taoiseach and the Semester Officer of the European Commission Representation in Ireland.

It produced two publications in 2014:

1. A briefing paper to explain the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU Semester process to a wider audience.
2. A thorough publication bringing together the views of different sectors on the key issues in the Semester

The Alliance also:

1. Produced a critique of the Country Specific Recommendations made by the European Commission for Ireland in 2014 and met the European Commission staff to discuss them.



2. Made a submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on EU Affairs on the Mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy.



3. Planned a series of activities organised by individual members of the Alliance and a joint workshop to discuss the social and environmental issues related to taxation.

The year culminated with a Conference in Dublin bringing together NGOs, trade unionists, decision-makers and politicians

to discuss how to make the Semester process more socially and environmentally sustainable.



### 3. Social Inclusion Forum, 2014



#### ***Bringing messages from regional meetings to the Social Inclusion Forum.***

EAPN Ireland and the Community Workers Co-op again worked with the Department of Social Protection to prepare for the Social Inclusion Forum (SIF). This is the main opportunity for anti-poverty groups and people affected by poverty to meet decision-makers to discuss all aspects of policy as it impact.

The SIF 2014 themes were:

- Local Government Reform
- The Roma Integration Strategy
- The Healthy Ireland Strategy
- Homelessness

EAPN Ireland and the Community Workers Coop organised a series of workshops around the country to support the participation of people with and experience of poverty and social exclusion, and their representative organisations in the Forum 2014.

216 people attended these workshops, in Galway; Dublin/Rialto; Letterkenny; Castleblaney; Tullamore; Kilkenny; Ennis and Cork. Thematic sessions were held in Dublin on Roma and Traveller Health and on Women and Poverty.

Local organisations helped to host the meetings and make contact with groups and their members locally. 23 participants, drawn from these regional meetings, attended the national preparatory meeting in Dublin on the 31<sup>st</sup> March. This meeting discussed feedback from the local meetings and how to bring these messages to the Government Forum.

A short report from the local meetings highlighting the issues and proposals of participants regarding poverty and social exclusion was presented at the SIF.



**Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton and head of the Social Inclusion Division Jim Walsh at the EAPN**



## 4. European Parliament Elections 2014

2014 saw the re-election of the European Parliament. EAPN Ireland, with the support of the European Parliament Information Office in Ireland, organised meetings for members in each of the three European Parliament constituencies:

- Midlands, North, West (in Longford)
- South (in Limerick)
- Dublin

Each of the meetings involved a morning workshop on understanding the work of the European Parliament and an afternoon 'hustings' where members could talk to candidates about their policies and priorities.

We also produced a [special issue of EAPN Ireland Review](#) on the elections.

Robin spoke at Wheel meetings on the elections in Cork, Kildare and Dublin.

The majority of candidates (and majority of elected MEPs) signed the EAPN pledge to support a specific European Anti Poverty Strategy and an annual hearing in the Parliament with people affected by poverty.



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### *Candidates with EAPN Ireland Chairperson Philip O'Connor at the Dublin meeting*



## 5. The European Minimum Income Network



Minimum income, the basic level of non-contributory social welfare, is an essential part of the fight against poverty and a major concern for EAPN in Ireland and across Europe. Adequate income is an important part of building a dignified life and becoming more active in society and in work.

In 2013-2014, EAPN Ireland brought together a network of organisations concerned with strengthening minimum income in Ireland as part of the Europe-wide European Minimum Income Network (EMIN)

The members of the Network were: EAPN Ireland; the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice; Focus Ireland; Age and Opportunity; the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed; the Nevin Economic Research Institute and the Disability Federation of Ireland



The Network commissioned Audrey Deane to draw up a study of the strengths and weaknesses of the Irish minimum income system and to discuss proposals on how to strengthen it in terms of adequacy, coverage and access.

From discussions around this study, the network drew up a roadmap/action plan towards minimum income in Ireland.

A Roundtable in October 2014 'An Action Plan for Minimum Income' brought together 54 people from NGOs, Government, unions and people affected by low income to discuss this action plan.



It was chaired by Hugh Frazer, Chair of the Group of European Experts on Minimum Income;

Presentations included:

- Minimum Income in Ireland, Audrey Deane, Project Advisor
- An International example, Katherine Duffy, EAPN UK
- A Minimum Income Scheme in Ireland - Context Micheál Collins, NERI
  - The draft Roadmap-Robin Hanan, EAPN Ireland
  - A European Initiative on Minimum Income - Anne Van Lanker

Robin Hanan also spoke at the UK and Italian conferences and Audrey Deane at the Maltese

## 6. Building Solidarity Across Europe - EAPN (Europe)

We continued to play an active role in the Europe-wide EAPN Network.

### Management and capacity BUILDING

Tess Murphy continued as the Irish representative on the EAPN Europe Executive Committee (ExCo). As well as taking part in the overall management of the network, Tess took an active role in developing the new membership support system for national networks.

Robin Hanan, with Tanya Basarab from EAPN Europe, helped with a one-day capacity building/review/advice session with the Macedonian/FYROM EAPN in October.

### Policy development and the EU Inclusion Strategies Group

Paul Ginnell continued to co-chair the EAPN Europe Policy Group dealing with social inclusion, playing an active role in producing analysis and submissions.

Lorraine Mulligan chaired a Europe-wide Task Force on the feasibility of a *Living Wage Campaign*. This will form the basis of future campaigning by EAPN Networks.

### European meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

EAPN Ireland had four delegates to this important conference.

They were:

- Ann O'Connor, Longford Community Resources

- Joanne McCabe, Focus Ireland and Peter McVerry Trust
- Mariaam Bhatti, Migrant Rights centre Ireland
- Annette Phelan, Donegal Community Workers Co-op

The main theme was 'funding the fight against poverty' and Annette presented a case study of use of cross-border funding for capacity-building in Donegal.

President Michael d Higgins sent a strong message to be read at the Conference.

**Greetings from the Irish Delegation**

Annette Patton  
Donegal Community Workers Co-op

Ann O'Connor  
Longford Community Resources

Joanne McCabe  
Focus Ireland and McVerry Trust

Mariaam Bhatti  
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

Robin Hanan, Coordinator

**Message of support from Michael D Higgins, President of Ireland**

As President of Ireland, I am delighted to express my support for the Irish delegation to the 13<sup>th</sup> European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty and my solidarity with the delegations from all members States represented at this important event.

Europe is currently facing a crisis which is not merely economic or fiscal in nature. There is also a profound crisis of democracy in Europe which is grounded in the alienation of so many people, across many generations but particularly young people, from the political institutions and the decisions that affect their lives. The economic and financial forces that shape their lives are frequently described as forces not amenable to accountability, they are speculative forces, neither accountable nor ethically sourced.

Parliaments are increasingly perceived as institutions from which power and democratic accountability has been leached.

Essential social goods and needs such as housing, healthcare, employment and education are increasingly considered as commodities to be calculated and traded on the speculative market. In the face of a dominant economic model which has proved so destructive, the challenge we face is to craft a public discourse in Europe in which all citizens – not just the most expert, or the most mobile among them – will be facilitated, supported and empowered to take part.

What is needed is a discourse that would let the experience of the poor and the unemployed of Europe be articulated, and begin the process of making government and the markets amenable to the tribunal of everyday justificatory debate and decision-making. Your meeting will, I hope, contribute greatly to the construction of this new pluralist and open discourse and I wish you my heartfelt support and good wishes in your important considerations.

*Beir beannacht ar bhúr n-íarrachtal (may your work be successful).*

Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland



## 7. Networking in Ireland – the Community Platform

EAPN Ireland continued to manage the Community Platform, an alliance of 20 national organisations working for social inclusion and equality.

The Platform continued to provide the link between member groups and the bilateral meetings between the Community and Voluntary Pillar and Government Departments.

At the start of the year, the Platform published a collection of case studies of people affected by austerity under the title of *Now You See Us*.

Before the Budget, the Platform issued a joint paper called 'four tests for Budget 2015' and followed this up with a press statement reacting to the Budget. Both were widely quoted in the Dáil and Seanad and in the media.





**COMMUNITY PLATFORM**  
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY

### Four Tests for Budget 2015

  

- 1: Will Budget 2015 redistribute income towards the poorest 20% of the population compensate those who have lost most over the last six years ?**
- 2: Will Budget 2015 strengthen access to quality employment?**
- 3: Will Budget 2015 provide the funding needed to restore and strengthen services which are of particular importance to people on low income?**
- 4: Will Budget 2015 put in place mechanisms to ensure that all areas of policy, including the budget itself, work to reduce poverty and inequality?**

## 8. Running the Network



*Board and staff, end 2014 (non in photo: Philip O'Connor and Lorraine Mulligan)*

### AGM and Board 2014

The AGM was held in Dublin in June. It included an information sharing session where members talked about their work.

There was a short seminar on the European Youth Guarantee and its implementation in Ireland, after the AGM led by James Doorley of the National Youth Council of Ireland.

The Board elected at the AGM was:

- **New members:** Anne Loftus; Aiden Lloyd; Pat Doyle (Peter McVerry Trust) Maureen Ward (Offaly Travellers Movement)
- **Existing members:** Farai Calvin Jeyacheya, Lorraine Mulligan, Michael Mackey, Philip O'Connor, Sheila Simmons and Tess Murphy.

Anne Loftus succeeded Philip O'Connor as Chairperson. Our thanks to Philip for a long and effective run in the Chair.

### Finances

EAPN Ireland succeeded in obtaining two years' funding from the Scheme to Support National Organisations administered by Pobal. We had funding from two European projects, out European network and the Department of Social, Protection.

