



European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland

Annual Report 2022

Introduction

Despite the economy doing well and the Government having a range of national and international commitments to poverty reduction, there is an ongoing failure to meet these. While some progress was being made to bring poverty levels down to levels from before the economic crisis, the situation did not improve for many communities and groups in society and we have now begun to see growing numbers of people experiencing poverty, including a deeper level of poverty for many. This includes a large number of households unable to pay bills and depending on charities and foodbanks to access basic essential, including food.

This situation cannot simply be put down to uncontrollable external factors, but to the failure of Government to address ongoing challenges in areas such as housing, health, care, income adequacy and access to decent work for all, and to make the right policy choices in response to new challenges, such as inflation. Some groups and communities are experiencing particular forms of exclusion and unaddressed and cumulative factors that put them at higher risk of poverty. This has a long-term and deep impact on people, families and communities. It has also facilitated some individuals and groups on the far-right to manipulate people's genuine concerns to create division in society.

At EU level, despite the European Pillar of Social Rights, we are also seeing deep levels of poverty and a failure to make any progress on the target to reduce poverty and social exclusion. While decision makers at EU level recognised the folly of an austerity approach during the economic crisis and took an investment approach in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, this in itself is far from adequate and it is crucial that the EU finds a much better way to ensure that EU Treaty values are matched by action. These are values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

2022 was a challenging and busy year for EAPN Ireland. We continued to work for the implementation of an integrated strategy to address poverty, and specifically highlighting the need for everyone to have an adequate income, and the role housing is currently playing as a driver of the cost of living and poverty. We published our report on the growing demand of people on the community and voluntary sector to access basic-necessities, highlighting the impact of this situation on those who need these supports and the organisations that provide them, outlining the action that is needed by Government to address the underlying causes.

We have worked closely with other allies throughout the year specifically on the inclusion of socio-economic status as a ground in our equality legislation, the implementation of Ireland's commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring the EU priorities a social and sustainable Union that benefits everyone.

Ensuring the strong and effective voice of those people and communities impacted on by poverty and social exclusion in the decisions and policies that impact on their lives continues to be a priority for the Network. However, the environment for realising this priority continues to be very challenging with scarce resources for autonomous community development and inadequate approaches to engagement by Government.

EAPN Ireland will continue to work for the creation of a society where everyone is guaranteed a decent life and can fulfil their full potential with their rights fully respected.

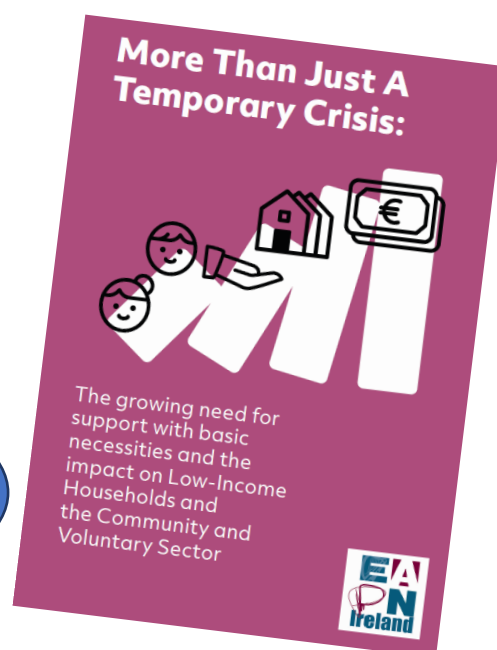
1. Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns

Cost of Living and growing dependence on charities to meet basic needs

The challenge of meeting the cost-of-living crisis is an ongoing reality for many people in society that results in many ending up in poverty, and some depending on charities to access basic necessities such as food, household items, support with bills. This reality has been deepened by Covid-19 pandemic and particularly the more recent rapid increases in prices of all basic necessities. Over the past two years EAPN Ireland has been looking at this issue with its members and partner organisations and in November published [More Than Just A Temporary Crisis: The growing need for support with basic necessities and the impact on Low-Income Households and the Community and Voluntary Sector](#). The research for the report, funded by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, was carried out by TASC using focus groups and interviews involving those who are both using and delivering supports with access to basic necessities in communities. The report highlights the impact on both the organisations and those accessing the supports and makes proposals to Government to address the issues they both face.

“So if you're looking at an adequate income, it has to be matched to what it costs to live in this society, and just saying, Oh, we put an extra fiver on the social welfare, that doesn't reflect what you need to live, to be able to meet your basic necessities with dignity and participate”.

“Well, maybe if I pay my fuel, or my heating bills, I'm a bit short for food. If I put enough food on the table, I have to compromise with heat”.



The proposals include ensuring everyone has access to an adequate income, ensuring the dependence on community and voluntary organisation to access basic necessities is not normalised, tackling energy poverty, addressing the inadequacies in service provision and evaluating how the Community and Voluntary sector could be better resourced and involved in informing policy, quality public services and decent jobs.

In July in advance of finalising the report EAPN Ireland hosted a workshop to discuss the draft finding of report with Joe O'Brien, Minister of State for Community Development and Charities and representatives from EAPN France.

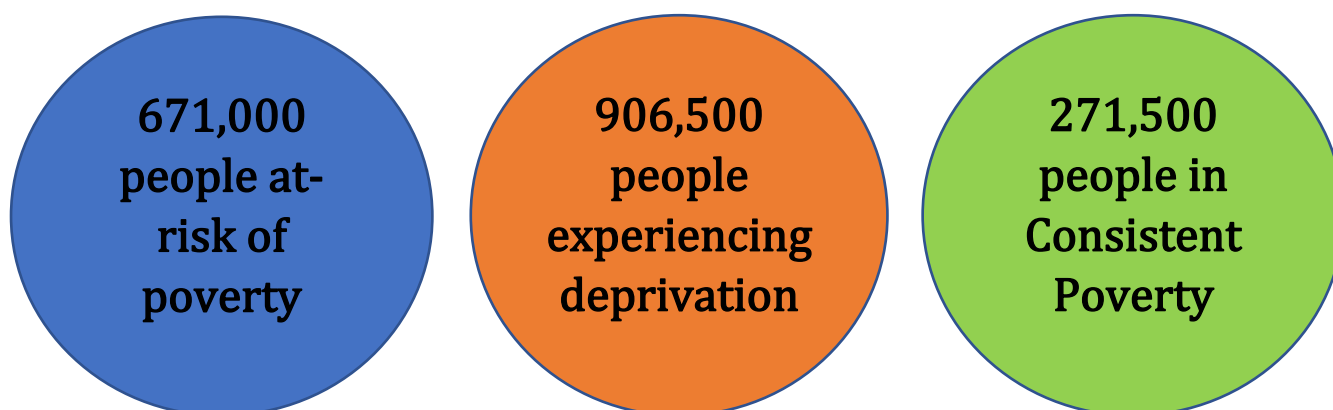
Implementing an effective anti-poverty strategy

Roadmap for Social Inclusion

EAPN Ireland continues to be represented on the Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group with Paul Ginnell as one of three external members. Along with the other representatives Paul has continued to facilitate the engagement of representatives from the wider Community and Voluntary sector through a linkage group.

The mid-term review of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025, Ireland's anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy, began in 2022. As with previous strategies EAPN Ireland has sought to make them as ambitious and effective as possible and its submission to the review in October focused on strengthening these. The outcome of the review is expected to be published in early 2023.

During 2022 the Central Statistics Office published the poverty and income data for 2021, with the 2022 data published early in 2023 showing a rapid increase in poverty. Consistent poverty increased from 4% to 5.3% with the Government's commitment to reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less by 2025. The 2022 data shows the following:



Social Inclusion Forum 2022

The Social Inclusion Forum took place as a hybrid event in 2022, with the in-person event taking place in Balbriggan in County Dublin on June 22nd.

In advance of the Forum 80 people attended four preparatory workshops organised by EAPN Ireland and Community Work Ireland (CWI). Two of these were in person workshops in Dublin and Galway and the other two were online. The four themes were Core Essentials – the cost of living and income adequacy; supporting communities; social inclusion and children and social inclusion and disabled people.

In order to inform the discussion at the Forum an oral report from the preparatory workshops was presented at the Forum with the involvement of some of the workshop participants and a [Key Messages](#) document was circulated. EAPN Ireland and CWI also facilitated participants from the preparatory workshops to participate in presenting these messages at the Forum.



Income adequacy

While the implementation of an integrated range of measures by Government that address the structural causes of poverty in all its dimensions is the focus of EAPN Ireland’s work, we continue to emphasise the need for an adequate income for all, whether in or out of work. This includes campaigning to ensure that everyone depending on social welfare has an income that allows them to live with dignity by benchmarking it at a level that is adequate to lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living. This is a key proposal across the policy work of EAPN Ireland including the work linked to the annual Budget process, the debate on the Future of Europe and the implementation of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

In late 2022 the EU adopted a Recommendation on Adequate Income for Active Inclusion. While this is welcome progress, and EAPN will push for it to be fully implemented, its implementation is voluntary in nature and it is not the enforceable and rights-based EU Directive on Minimum Income EAPN has and will continue to campaign for.

Socio-economic status as a ground for discrimination in Irish law

EAPN Ireland, along with other members of the #AddThe10th Alliance, continued to campaign for socio-economic status to be added as a ground for discrimination in Irish equality legislation. The focus of the work was on the ongoing review of Irish equality legislation initiated by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in 2021 and committed to looking at the inclusion of socio-economic status as a new ground. There were no developments



with this review in 2022. The Alliance made a presentation to Oireachtas member in the Leinster House audio-visual room in November. Paul Ginnell is also a member of Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission’s - Future of Equality Legislation Advisory Committee, which meets monthly from April 2022 to April 2023 to advise on IHREC’s proposals for the review of the legislation.

Giving voice to the reality of poverty at European level

In November the 20th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty took place in Brussels. The theme of Meeting was *The Unbearable Cost of Living*. National delegates discussed how the unaffordable and rapidly increasing cost of living is impacting on people in their countries and made proposals to EU and national policy makers on the policy responses that were needed. The Irish delegation highlighted the impact of increases in the cost of food, energy and other essentials, but also the ongoing impact of the inadequate provision of affordable and appropriate accommodation, including for people with disabilities and Travellers, and the unacceptable condition of much of current social housing. The Irish delegation was led by Lesley O'Reilly from St Kevin's FRC, who is a Board member of EAPN Ireland, Gillian Stafford from Independent Living Movement Ireland and Helena Power from Kilkenny Traveller Community Movement.



Fintan Farrell, Meeting Facilitator and Gillian Stafford (ILMI) presenting workshop feedback



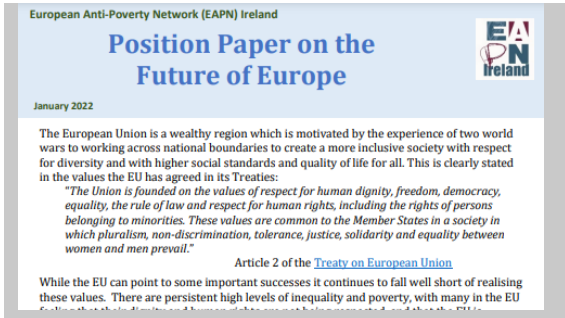
Lesley O'Reilly (on the right) speaking at the opening of the 20th EU Meeting

Other policy work

Policy Submissions: During 2022 EAPN Ireland made submissions to Budget 2023, the National Reform Programme, the National Minimum Wage, the review of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion and Ireland's contribution to the EU's target for reducing poverty and social exclusion.

Housing as a driver of poverty: The access to affordable, secure, quality housing and accommodation is a key factor in ensuring people can live with dignity and be able to participate fully in society. However, the ongoing housing crisis is reinforcing pre-existing factors that is resulting in deepening poverty and social exclusion for many in society. The 2022 AGM workshop on *'The role of housing in driving the cost of living'* included strong inputs by Lesley O'Reilly the Community and Family Development Worker in St Kevin's FRC in Kilnamanagh in Tallaght and Lorcan Sirr, Housing Policy Analyst and Senior Lecturer at Technological University Dublin. These helped inform a lively debate which informed EAPN Ireland's existing policy recommendations on housing including its submission to the Housing Commission's Public Consultation on Housing, calling for the right to housing to be enshrined in the Irish Constitution.

Future of Europe: In January 2022, following work with the Board and the Policy Group of the Network, EAPN Ireland launched its Position Paper on the Future of Europe at a meeting of its members.



The meeting included an input from Senator Alice-Mary Higgins on her experience of engaging with the Conference on the Future of Europe, a process set up by the EU to gather and consider proposals from EU citizens for how the EU could develop into the future. Following the launch of the Position Paper, its recommendations were submitted to the

Conference portal for consideration as part of this consultation process. EAPN Ireland also took a role in highlighting the Conference proposal on an EU role on the issue of minimum income, a proposal which was adopted at the conclusions of the process.

Poverty Watch 2022: To coincide with the 17th October UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty EAPN Ireland launched its Poverty Watch 2022 “Equality for All? Ireland as a Society. not just an Economy”.

The Poverty Watch focused on the issues that most impact marginalised groups in Ireland today and establishes recommendations to be taken at a government level in order to address poverty and social exclusion. It included a focus on the rising living costs, the housing and energy crisis, and income inadequacy calling for the urgent investment in essential public services and in autonomous community development. It highlighted the specific experience of Travellers and people seeking international protection



Foundations for Futures Europe Project



From 2021 to 2022 EAPN Ireland was one of six members in the Foundations for Futures Europe partnership funded through the Europe for Citizens programme and led by Maynooth University. The partnership included civil society and higher education partners from Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Serbia and Sweden and the aim of the project was to engage citizens in debates and discussion

groups. During the project, partners carried out activities separately in their own countries, and attended joint activities in Ireland and Sweden.

Between March and May 2022 carried out four workshops under the theme ‘Creating a social and inclusive Europe’. Over 50 participants attended the workshops in Dublin and Kildare, which were organised through the Communiversity programme in

Maynooth University. After discussing the EU and its values and role participants raised a range of issues and proposals aimed at making the EU and Ireland’s membership of it more effective in creating a more inclusive society for everyone.



Summary of Publications, Submissions and Press Statements in 2022

- [Published Position Paper on the Future of Europe](#) and [input to Conference on Future of Europe, January](#)
- [Submission to National Reform Programme, February](#)
- [Submission on National Minimum Wage, March](#)
- [Press Statement on SILC 2021, May](#)
- [Key Messages to Social Inclusion Forum from the Preparatory meetings, June](#)
- [Pre-Budget Submission 2023](#) and [Press Statement](#) after Budget announcement, *June and October*
- [Published Poverty Watch 2022 - 'Equality for all? Ireland as a society not just an economy', October](#)
- [Briefing on Poverty and Income data 2021, July](#)
- [Submission on Ireland's contribution to EU poverty target, September](#)
- [Submission to Housing Commission Public Consultation on Housing, September](#)
- [Submission to Review of Roadmap for Social Inclusion, October](#)
- [Published 'More than just a temporary Crisis - The growing need for support with basic necessities and the impact on Low-Income Households and the Community and Voluntary Sector', November](#)
- [Press Statement on 2022 Enforced Deprivation levels, December](#)
- [Better Europe Alliance Submission to Semester Process, December](#)

Communications

Communicating with its members, the wider public and policy makers is an important tool for EAPN Ireland in bringing about social change. The main communications work was carried out by Irene Byrne, the Policy and Communications Officer. Irene left in November and we wish her well.

The EAPN Ireland **website** www.eapn.ie is kept updated with all the latest news on the Network and its activities.



EAPN Ireland is very active on **Twitter**
@EAPNIreland

EAPN Ireland produced three **press statements** on some of the key developments over the year and took part in a number of radio interviews.



The network also has a presence on Instagram
eapnireland30

A total of three **Blogs** were published

- Policy responses to the housing crisis – a road to nowhere? – Aiden Lloyd
- Cost of living measures must prioritise those on lowest incomes and address long-term causes – Paul Ginnell
- The Right to Seek Asylum – Irene Byrne

Four editions of the EAPN Ireland **NewsFlash e-newsletter** were published in 2022. These go to almost 1,000 recipients to update them on the activities of EAPN Ireland, our European network and other national and European news.

2. Working Effectively Through Networks

EAPN Ireland recognises the importance of working closely with other organisations and networks at national and EU levels in order to achieve our common goal of an inclusive, just and sustainable future for all. Over time we have built up our work for collective change and take a leadership role in coordinating some of these.



Since its foundation in 1990 EAPN Ireland has been an active member of the **EAPN (Europe)** and this continued in 2022. EAPN (Europe) currently has a membership of 32 national networks and 13 European organisations. The European network plays a crucial role at EU level in mobilising those experiencing poverty, their organisations and policy makers in the fight against poverty.

In 2022 Anne Loftus continued to represent EAPN Ireland on the Executive Committee (Board) of EAPN (Europe) and Paul Ginnell represented them on the European network's policy group (EU Inclusion Strategies Group). Aiden Lloyd handed over to Lesley O'Reilly as the Irish Coordinator for the European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty and Irene Byrne and Alice Kelly represented EAPN Ireland on the Communications Group of EAPN (Europe). October 2022 saw the welcome return of in-person meetings with both the Executive Committee and policy group meeting in Brussels. The meetings were followed by the presentation of the findings from the EAPN Poverty Watch for 2022 in the European Parliament on the 13th October. The European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty took place in Brussels in November.

EAPN priorities for 2022 were the deepening cost of living crisis, ensuring a just transition, the impact of the invasion of Ukraine, the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights including minimum income schemes that were adequate and accessible and a European Semester process that ensured a social and sustainable future., While continuing to keep a focus on its key policy priorities during 2021 a lot of EAPN's work during the year continued to be informed by the impact of covid-19 on poverty, with a growing focus on the impact of energy prices on the cost of living. More at www.eapn.eu.



Paul Ginnell and Anne Loftus at the launch of the EAPN (Europe) Poverty Watch in the European Parliament in October



COMMUNITY PLATFORM
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY

Since 2012 EAPN Ireland has supported the coordination of the Community Platform and continued to do so in 2021. During 2022 the Platform focused on developing proposals for a new and more effective model of collaborative governance between government and civil society, involving community organisations representing those most directly impacted by the issues. This approach would result in more effective and sustainable solutions to addressing societal challenges such as poverty, housing, care, health inequality and climate transition. The Platform proposals were outlined in a Discussion Paper ‘Towards a progressive model of collaborative governance’ which was launched in the Mansion House in September by Joe O’Brien, Minister of State for Community Development and Charities.

Through the Community and Voluntary Pillar, the Community Platform also participated in a number of bilateral meetings with different Government Departments. Further information at www.communityplatform.ie.



01. Introduction

The Programme for Government (PFG) 2020-2023 sets out the Government's commitments to social dialogue recognising 'the importance of regular and open engagement with all sectors of society'. It commits to the establishment of a Social Dialogue Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach and to 'create new models of sectoral engagement'. The Community Platform welcomes the emphasis on new models as opposed to a single approach to sectoral engagement between the state and civil society. This approach is particularly important as we steer our way out of the pandemic, rebuild our economy and support communities that have been severely impacted by Covid-19. We do this while also facing the challenge of climate change in a serious way. New effective models will support the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals including through the building of more effective, accountable and inclusive institutions as committed to under Goal 16.

Complex Social Problems

Many of the issues that public policy is struggling to deal with involve the need for cooperation between multiple government departments and/or public agencies. They often involve trying to influence people's attitudes and behaviour, rather than simply delivering a service. Complex social problems include issues such as climate change, housing and accommodation, childcare, poverty and inequality, global migration, the drugs crisis, and the threats posed by global and domestic far right movements.

To move forward, it is necessary to address the challenges with current models of engagement between the state and civil society. Community Platform members have identified a number of core concerns including a lack of joined up, multidimensional and complementary approaches to solving issues, limited collaborative leadership capacity, the engagement of civil society in mechanisms that demand time and energy, but which struggle to generate effective outcomes; and a need and willingness from all participants in collaborative processes to learn from each other.

In addition, we are concerned about the lack of clarity about accountability and implementation, and processes to support the participation of affected communities in public policy development. Many structures and models of engagement are outdated and we need new ways of thinking and critical reflection.

New Approaches

The purpose of this document is to propose a new approach to solving complex problems based on effective engagement between the state and civil society. This builds on the Platform's 'Valuing Social Dialogue' paper and sets out how new, innovative and more collaborative approaches to engagement can be created. We need approaches that are dynamic and fit for purpose, and that maximise involvement and harness the expertise of organisations and communities.



Better Europe Alliance

In 2014 EAPN Ireland brought together, and continues to support, the Better Europe Alliance of Irish Civil Society Organisations working for a Social and Sustainable Europe. The 12 members of the Alliance involves social and equality organisations, the Environmental Pillar and SIPTU.

During 2022 the Alliance members continued to engage with the European Semester process, meeting with Commission fact-finding teams in March, September and November and making a joint submission to the Semester process in December.



EAPN Ireland is a member of the Irish Coalition of civil society organisations which has come together to ensure that the Irish Government is effectively implementing policies to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Coalition includes domestic anti-poverty and equality organisations, Trade Unions, international development NGOs and environmental organisations. During 2022 the Coalition focused on Ireland's implementation of its commitments under the SDGs, including influencing the new Implementation Plan. It is now preparing a Coalition input to the Government's progress report to the UN which will take place in the summer of 2023. The Coalition website is www.ireland2030.org.



In 2020 EAPN Ireland became a founding member of the EURAFRICAN Platform on Poverty and Migration (ECOPPAM). This new Platform has the purpose to combat poverty and exclusion in Africa and Europe through the development of effective social and employment policies and programmes. ECOPPAM International has 23 founding national platforms including 19 in Africa and four in Europe.

3. The Organisation

Membership

EAPN Ireland has 164 members. These members are mainly local and national organisations and a number of individuals committed to bringing about a more just society and addressing the causes and consequences of poverty.

Board

The Board of EAPN Ireland plays an important role in providing leadership to the organisation and met eight times during 2022.

Board Members during this period were:

- Aiden Lloyd (The Rights Platform – Vice-Chair)
- Anne Loftus (Theatre for Change Galway)
- Farai Calvin Jeyacheya (Zimbabwe Heritage Trust)
- John Brennan (Irish Association of Social Workers - Chairperson)
- Kerrie Prendergast (Longford Women’s Link)
- Loraine Mulligan (SIPTU)
- Sive Bresnihan (Comhlámh - Treasurer)

Resigned in 2022

- Aoife Masterson –Offaly Traveller Movement
- James Cawley (Independent Living Movement Ireland)
- Michelle Kearns (National Traveller MABS)

Joined in 2022

- Aoife Masterson –Offaly Traveller Movement
- Lesley O’Reilly - St. Kevin’s Family Resource Centre, Kilnamanagh, Dublin

Thanks to James Cawley and Michelle Kearns who stepped down from the Board during 2022 for their much-appreciated contribution and commitment. Both James and Michelle served as Chairpersons of EAPN Ireland. Thanks also to Aoife Masterson who was a member briefly during the year.

Staff

EAPN Ireland has three part-time staff:

- Paul Ginnell, Director
- Irene Byrne, Policy and Communications Officer (until November 2022)
- Maureen Gondipon, Administration and Finance Officer

Irene Byrne left EAPN Ireland in November to take up a new challenge. We would like to thank Irene for her great contribution to the organisation and to the fight against poverty during four and a half years with EAPN Ireland.

We also welcome Tim Hanley who joined EAPN Ireland as Policy and Communications Officer in early 2023.

Office move

In May 2022 EAPN Ireland moved from the National Women's Council office on North King Street, to the nearby Carmichael House on North Brunswick Street. We thank the NWC for their hospitality over six years and the staff of Carmichael House for their very friendly welcome and support as we settled in.

Funding

EAPN Ireland receives its core funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNOs). During 2022 we were successful in our application for funding under the scheme for 2022-2025. Accessing this scheme is critical to EAPN Ireland being able to operate and to draw in additional funding to run the organisation and organise activities.

During 2022 the network also accessed the following funding:

- EAPN (Europe) provides support for our policy work on the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Semester and to produce the Poverty Watch and also to support participation in the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty;
- The Department of Social Protection provided support for our work with Community Work Ireland to support participation in the Social Inclusion Forum;
- The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission for the project entitled 'An Analysis of the Increasing Demand for Basic Necessities as provided by the Community and Voluntary Sector'.
- Funding was received from the Europe for Citizens fund of the European Union as part of our participation in the Foundations for Future Europe Project.
- The Department of the Rural and Community Development for the Community Platform.

Finally, income from the members of EAPN Ireland continues to be an extremely important and valued resource in supporting the ongoing work of the organisation.

Remembering Fintan Farrell



At the very end of 2022 we had the very sad news of the death of our friend and colleague Fintan Farrell. Fintan was a passionate advocate for social justice, human rights and the fight against poverty. He believed very strongly that those impacted by these issues should collectively be at the forefront of advocacy for change and spent much of his working life building networks to support this goal. He was the Director of the Irish Traveller Movement during the 1990s and during this time became involved in the foundation of EAPN.

He represented EAPN Ireland on the European network's Executive Committee and was elected as President from 1996-2000. In 2001 Fintan moving to Brussels in 2001 to cover the maternity leave of the EAPN Policy Officer and one year later was appointed as Director. Fintan left EAPN in 2019, but maintained strong links with the network. In December last year Fintan was appointed as the new Policy and Communications Officer with EAPN Ireland, but sadly died before he could take up the role. Fintan's spirit lives on through the strong legacy he has left.

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

EAPN Ireland receives core funding from the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) which is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Rural and Community Development

