



EAPN Ireland Annual Report 2017



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Introduction

Ireland is experiencing an economic recovery, unemployment is falling and increasing numbers of people are in jobs. Average incomes are growing and house sales have taken off, even if slower than before. Austerity budgets are now also a thing of the past. These are all positive developments.

If it wasn't for the constant increase in the number of people and families in homelessness it would be easy for most people in Ireland to forget that we still face major social problems and that the impact of policies introduced during the years of austerity are having a long term negative impact on many people.

785,000 people are on incomes below the poverty line and one in five is experiencing material deprivation. Many people face major challenges in accessing services and others are working in jobs which are precarious in nature and low paid.

We welcome the Government commitment to publishing a new national action plan for social inclusion and in 2018. We have to ensure that this plan gets to address the causes of poverty and social exclusion, including those causes which have deep structural roots. We also need to ensure that leaves no-one behind, as called for in the Sustainable Development Goals signed up to by the Government.

Most of the social issues are not unique to Ireland. Across Europe 119 million people experience poverty and social exclusion. There has been a failure to positively address major challenges and many people have begun to put their support in far right political parties, which turn people's anger against the other who are often the most excluded in society. The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in November 2017 is therefore an important development. In the coming years it is crucial that these rights are made real.

There is a very clear link between policies at EU and national level and their impact on poverty. During 2017 EAPN Ireland continued to work in solidarity with our colleagues in Ireland and across Europe to turn the tide on policies which lead to poverty, inequality and exclusion. We also continued to give voice to those who are impacted on by these policies.

In our annual report for 2017 you will see the work carried out by the network through our direct engagement in local and national events, our policy and advocacy engagement with policy makers and the work we have done with others to bring about change.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Robin Hanan who retired as Director of EAPN Ireland in December 2017 for his dedication to EAPN Ireland and his untiring commitment as a passionate advocate in the fight against poverty at national and EU level for many years.

1. Training and Events: Local, national and EU

Sustainable Development Goals

EAPN Ireland partnered with Comhlámh in November 2016 and March 2017 to organise two rounds of training workshops on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The workshops entitled *‘Connecting the Dots’* used the UN Goals as a way of building the capacity of local community organisations and advocates to address poverty issues.



The workshops were organised in Cork, Dublin and Galway. The first round involved an introduction to the UN Goals while the second built participants capacity to use the Goals in their work.

The EU, its Parliament and the Fight Against Poverty

In April and May workshops took place in each of the three EU constituencies in Ireland on understanding how best to influence and use EU policy in the fight against poverty. The workshops had two parts, the first of which focused on building the capacity of participants to understand EU policy while the second involved an opportunity to engage with an Irish Member of the European Parliament (MEP).



Midlands/North-West Constituency

Dublin Constituency

South Constituency

The meeting in the Dublin constituency involved Sein Fein MEP Lynn Boylan; the workshop in Sligo in the Midlands/North-West Constituency was with Independent MEP Marian Harkin, while Fine Gael MEP Sean Kelly from the South Constituency participated in the workshop in Waterford. These workshops were part of a wider series of workshops involving the Wheel and the Environmental Pillar.

Social Inclusion Forum and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion

EAPN Ireland again joined with Community Work Ireland to carry out a series of preparatory workshops and focus groups in advance of the annual Social Inclusion Forum (SIF). The 2017 Forum took place on the 25th May. In advance of this Focus Ireland and the Simon Communities of Ireland supported EAPN Ireland to organise a focus group with people who had experience of homelessness. EAPN Ireland also co-organised a meeting in Dublin on the eve of the SIF to plan participation and presentation of key messages from the preparatory workshops and focus groups. After the Forum EAPN Ireland held regional meetings in Longford and Limerick on the Government's planned new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.



Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar and Anne Vaughan (Assistant Secretary, Department of Social Protection) listen to feedback from the local workshops from Robin Hanan (EAPN Ireland) and Ann Irwin (CWI)

Workshop on access to adequate social welfare

Following our Annual General Meeting in June 2017 we held a workshop entitled *“Winning the public debate on welfare”*. The workshop discussion was led by an input from Rachel Broady of National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Manchester and Salford, UK. The NUJ members are from the UK and Ireland and Rachel highlighted the work being done by the NUJ to promote positive approaches to reporting on poverty and addressing the stereotyping of people living in poverty. The workshop was part of wider work being done by EAPN Ireland on the issue of access to an adequate social welfare for everyone who needs it. This work is linked to a two-year European campaign led by the European Minimum Income Network.



Participants at the AGM workshop on access to adequate social welfare

EAPN (Europe) General Assembly

From 19-21 October EAPN Ireland hosted over 100 delegates in the F2 Centre in Fatima in Dublin for its General Assembly (AGM) and the meetings of its policy group (EU Inclusion Strategies Group) and board (Executive Committee). On the first day the delegates, from 32 European countries and a number of Brussels based European organisations in membership of EAPN (Europe), also participated in an opening workshop and four visits to projects around Dublin which aimed to motivate them during their deliberations.

The opening workshop involved inputs from Anastacia Crickley, Chairperson of the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Independent Senator Alice-Mary Higgins and Salome Mbugua, Head of Mission at Wezesha and founder of the migrant women's network Akidwa. The project visits were to Rialto Rights in Action, Fatima Groups United, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Focus Ireland's homeless residence in Stanhope Green, Dublin. On the final day delegates of the General Assembly, Regina Doherty, the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, gave the keynote address to the delegates.



Left: Minister for Social Protection, Regina Doherty (centre) before her keynote speech to EAPN General Assembly with Anne Loftus, Chairperson of EAPN Ireland, Tess Murphy, EAPN Ireland representative on the European Board of EAPN, Robin Hanan, Director of EAPN Ireland, Maria Jaleiskova (Bulgaria), Vice-President of EAPN (Europe) and Paul Ginnell, Policy Officer with EAPN Ireland



Above: Delegates voting at the EAPN (Europe) 2017 General Assembly in Dublin

European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

In 2017 the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty took place in November with a focus on in-work poverty. Robin Hanan went as Irish Coordinator and facilitated a workshop at the meeting and Dean Burke (Fatima Groups United) presented the issues from a local experience.



Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development



We continue to be part of the host group for the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development (SWSD) to be held in Ireland in July 2018. The focus will be on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This conference, led by three international alliances, will attract around 2,500 participants. It is led in Ireland by a partnership of the Irish Association of Social Workers, EAPN Ireland and four universities.

2. Policy and advocacy Work

The overall goal of EAPN Ireland is to impact on policy in order to address the causes and consequences of poverty. EAPN Ireland was founded as a network mainly to engage with and influence EU policy and its implementation in Ireland as it was recognised by its founders that policy developed in the EU has a direct impact on poverty in Ireland. In reality there is no division between EU and national policy and EAPN Ireland works across both with the aim of having the greatest impact on poverty.

EAPN Ireland's policy work continues to be coordinated through the Policy Group, involving representatives from a number of our member organisations across different groups in society. The Policy Group is chaired by Brid O'Brien, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOEU). It also involves representatives from Age Action Ireland, Congress Centres Network, Disability Federation of Ireland, 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 and SIPTU.

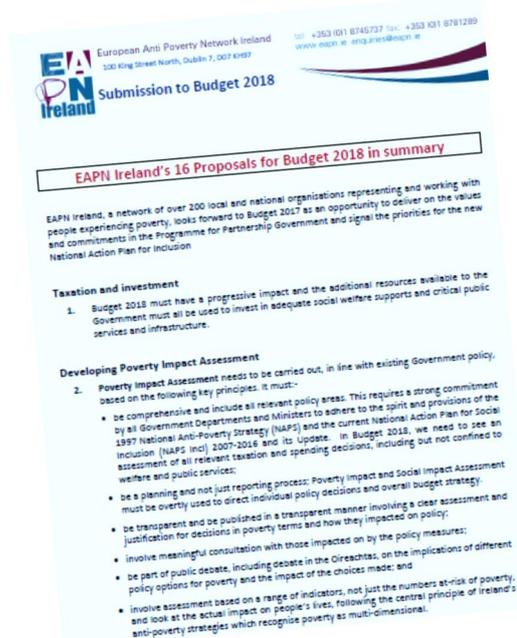
In 2017 The Policy Group contributed to policy submissions and the 2018 Poverty Briefing. In 2016 the Group began to host lunchtime discussions on key issues and it organised two of these in 2017. The first, on the social impact of Brexit, was led by an input by Brid O'Brien, INOEU, while in the second discussion on poverty and equality proofing was introduced by Mary Murphy from Maynooth University and a Commissioner of Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Budget 2018

In advance of Budget 2018 we made our annual pre-budget submission. The submission listed 16 headline demands under the six headings:

- É Taxation and investment
- É Developing Poverty Impact Assessment
- É Ensuring an adequate minimum income for all
- É Welfare to decent work
- É Asylum seekers and undocumented migrants
- É Disability related payment

EAPN Ireland also participated in the Department of Social Protection Pre-Budget Forum in July and contributed in particular to the debate on Poverty Proofing.



The network reacted to the announcements in Budget 2018 with a press release which stated that **'We welcome investment in welfare and services. Now we need a much more ambitious plan to fight poverty'**. It highlighted that while the Budget contained some positives, it was important that they were part of an ambitious and integrated plan aimed at reducing poverty.

Future of Europe Debate

In 2016 the European Commission published a White paper outline five possibilities for the future of the EU. These ranged from members states doing more together, to doing less, or some member states going it alone on some policy areas while others could opt out. In 2016 EAPN Ireland made a written submission to the European Commission and the Irish Government. In November 2017 EAPN Ireland made a presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Union Affairs. The submission highlighted the need for the EU to implement policies consistent with both its founding 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* and with the sustainable social, environmental and economic vision it has signed up to under the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This debate continues into 2018 with the Irish Government initiating a wider consultation among citizens.

European Semester and Europe 2020 Strategy

Since 2010 most of the EU's engagement with its Member States on both its economic and its social goals, has been through what is called the European Semester. This includes the delivery on the poverty target in the Europe 2020 strategy. The overall process has been difficult and has resulted in increased poverty both in Ireland and throughout the EU. Despite some recent progress there were still 118 million people in poverty and social exclusion in the EU and almost 395,000 people in consistent poverty in Ireland. EAPN Ireland engages with this process at national level and through its European network, presenting analysis and proposals on a regular basis. As part of this process Paul Ginnell met with European Commissioner Moscovici during his visit to Dublin in January 2017 and in April the EAPN Ireland Policy Group made a submission to Irish Government's National Reform Programme. Much of the work of EAPN Ireland on the Semester and Europe 2020 is also through the Better Europe Alliance, which is Co-ordinated by EAPN Ireland.

European Pillar of Social Rights

In 2016 the European Commission started a consultation process to develop a European Pillar of Social Rights. EAPN Ireland both directly and through the European network made submissions and participated in events to inform the Pillar. In November 2017 the new Pillar, containing 20 employment and social rights, was agreed by the European Commission, European Parliament, European Council (heads of State of the EU) and by EU Member States, including Ireland. In the coming years EAPN Ireland will work to try to ensure that the Pillar becomes a reality.

Poverty Briefing 2018

Following on from its Poverty Briefing 2015 work got underway in 2017 on a new Poverty Briefing which was published in January 2018. The **Poverty Briefing 2018 and Proposals for a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion** outlines that poverty levels are now higher than when the current targets to reduce it were set. It outlines what many of the current issues are across a range of policy issues and how this impacts on different people in society. Finally, as Ireland begins to consult on a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2018-2021 the Briefing includes proposals for the type of strategy that is needed if it is to be effective and make a serious impact on poverty.



EAPN Ireland's proposals call for :

- A comprehensive and ambitious strategy
- A strategy for a decent income
- A strategy for quality jobs
- A strategy for quality services
- A strategy to end homelessness and ensure housing for all
- A strategy based on human rights, dignity and equality
- A strategy which we can afford

Social Inclusion Forum 2017

At the Social Inclusion Forum in May 2017 Robin Hanan from EAPN Ireland and Ann Irwin from Community Work Ireland presented the key issues arising from local preparatory workshops to the Forum. In doing this they were joined by a number of participants from the local workshops The Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar, who soon after was appointed as Taoiseach, responded to the issues arising in the presentation. Later in the Forum Paul Ginnell made a presentation in the workshop where the focus was on the poverty target and on its possible review.

Communications

Despite its limited resources EAPN Ireland places importance on communicating our message and activities with members and the wider public as a means of bringing about change.

During 2017 we continued to produce the NewsFlash e-newsletter which goes to over 2,000 recipients to update them on activities of EAPN Ireland and our European network as well as other national and European news. EAPN Ireland also kept up its activity on Twitter and Facebook and has started the process of developing a new website. There were also a number of Press releases throughout the year.

Contributions to Conferences and Events

- **Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth**: Paul Ginnell represented EAPN (Europe) in a workshop which addressed the issue of adequate income in or out of work.
- **Conference on European Commission’s Country Specific Recommendations for Ireland**: Paul Ginnell presented the Better Europe Alliance analysis at the conference organised by the European Commission and Institute of International and European Affairs
- **EAPN (Europe) Conference on post Europe 2020 strategy**: In June Paul Ginnell, EAPN Ireland Policy Officer and Michael Mackey, Galway Simon and EAPN Ireland Board members, spoke at the Conference in Brussels which looked at developing proposals for an EU strategy will replace the current Europe 2020 strategy.
- **EAPN (Europe) Conference ‘Building a European Social Standards Union’** In December 2017 Paul Ginnell and Michael Mackey made inputs at the EAPN Europe Conference in the European Parliament which presented EAPN’s analysis of the European Semester in 2017 and the Pillar of Social Rights.
- **‘Health as a Human Right’ Seminar** organised by the Community Platform and ATD in July 2017 initiated a discussion on the right to health. It included inputs and world café discussion on the Platform’s Six Principles for inclusive health policy and the Oireachtas Committee Sláintecare report which outlines radical proposals for reforming Ireland’s health system.
- **European Economic and Social Committee Consultation (EESC) on impact of Troika**: EAPN Ireland made an input to the EESC working group in November
- **EU Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth April 2017**– Paul Ginnell attended as part of the Irish Government delegation and contributed to a workshop on *Ensuring the right of young people to adequate income*.
- **European Parliament Seminar ‘Can the Semester help build a better Social Europe?’ January 2017** Paul Ginnell represented EAPN (Europe) in presenting an assessment of how well the European Semester is doing in delivering on social rights.

Publications and Submissions

Available on www.eapn.ie

- **Poverty Briefing 2018 and Proposals for a new Anti-poverty Strategy January 2018**
- **Press Release Survey of Income and Living Conditions, 2016 December 2017**
In December the Central Statistics Office published the latest information on poverty in the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2016. In its press release in response to the survey EAPN Ireland highlighted that the report showed that people living in poverty are not feeling the recovery.
- **Submission to the National Action Plan for Jobs November 2017**
The key issues highlighted in the EAPN Input, including its contribution to the follow-up Forum organised by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, was the importance of ensuring that the Action Plan include measures which support all groups and communities to access decent jobs.
- **Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection Statement of Strategy, September 2017**
- **Submission on the Future of Europe to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Union Affairs on the Future of Europe October 2017**
Contributing to the debate on the Future of Europe initiated by the European Commission, the submission highlighted that the EU needed to implement policies consistent with the values of its founding Treaties and with the balanced sustainable social, environmental and economic vision it has signed up to under the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Submission to Budget 2018 June 2017** – See above. The network also issued a Press Release following the publication of Budget 2018 in October 2017 entitled ‘*We welcome investment in welfare and services. Now we need a much more ambitious plan to fight poverty*’
- **Better Europe Alliance Response to European Commission 2017 Country Report for Ireland April 2017**
In its analysis to the Commission’s 2017 report on Ireland the Alliance called for a balanced approach to social, sustainable and economic policy and the levels of progressive taxation and investment needed to deliver on a creating a better future for everyone in Irish society.
- **Summary of Regional Workshops for 2017 Social Inclusion Forum May 2017**
A report outlining the issues and proposals arising from the workshops and focus group Presented to the participants at the Forum in May.
- **Submission to National Reform Programme 2017 April 2017**
EAPN Ireland’s submission to the Government’s NRP for 2017 outlined the measures Ireland needs to take to bring about a balanced social and economic recovery and to achieve its poverty and other Europe 2020 targets so that no-one gets left behind.
- **Submission to the Consultation on the Working Family Payment in the Department of Social Protection March 2017**
In its input to the consultation on a proposed new in-work support for low paid workers EAPN Ireland highlighted that any new form of supports should contribute to addressing in-work poverty and at a minimum not make people worse off than existing supports. It should also address some of the shortcomings of these supports which limit access and take-up.
- **Response to the publication of the CSO poverty figures (SILC), 2015 February 2017**
In response to the publication of the 2015 numbers of those in poverty EAPN Ireland demanded a serious commitment by the Government to fighting poverty and for the implementation of an integrated plan.

3. Working effectively through Networks

For 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.

EAPN (Europe)

In 2017 EAPN Ireland continued to play an active and central role in the European network of EAPN. EAPN (Europe) currently has a membership of 32 national networks and 17 European organisations

Tess Murphy is EAPN Ireland's representative on the EAPN (Europe) Executive Committee (Board) and is a member of the group working on developing the membership of EAPN Europe.

Paul Ginnell continued to co-chair the European network's policy group (EU Inclusion Strategies Group). As a member of this group he contributed to a seminar in January in the European Parliament entitled *Can the Semester help build a better Social Europe?*

In April Paul represented EAPN (Europe) in a workshop on the right of young people to an adequate income at the EU's Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth



Paul Ginnell and Michael Mackey, an EAPN Ireland Board member, both made presentations at the annual EAPN's annual conference in Brussels in June and at their seminar in December on the European Semester and Pillar of Social Rights in the European Parliament.

During the year EAPN Ireland also participated in two Task Forces which involved a small group of members working on a specific short-term action. Robin Hanan was a member of the Task Force on Migration and Poverty. Aiden Lloyd was a member of the Task Force which produced a toolkit on using Human Rights to address Poverty and Social Exclusion.

In October 2017 over 100 delegates travelled from across Europe to the General Assembly (AGM) of the European network in the F2 Centre in Rialto in Dublin. The delegates participated in three days of meetings and site visits.

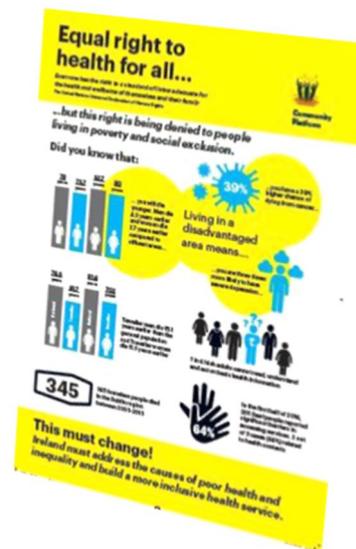
EAPN Castilla y León Pilot Project

EAPN Ireland is a partner in the EU funded PACT initiative in the Spanish region of Castilla y León. The project is piloting new ways to bring about changes in the way social services are delivered so as to better meet the needs of families at risk of social exclusion. There will be a seminar in Dublin in September 2018 to look at the learning from the project and how it relates to practice in Ireland.

Community Platform

EAPN Ireland provides secretariat support to the Community Platform and during 2017 the Platform launched its new website www.communityplatform.ie.

Following the launch of *Six Principles for an inclusive health Policy* in 2016 the Platform continued to focus on the right to health in 2017. This involved hosting the Health as a Human Right seminar with the Platform member All Together in Dignity Ireland in July. The Seminar looked at how to address health inequalities and analysed proposals in the Sláintecare report published by the all-party Oireachtas Committee for reforming the health system. It involved inputs from Roisin Shorthall TD who chaired the Oireachtas Committee, Sara Bourke - Centre for Health Policy and Management at Trinity College, Ronnie Fay - Pavee Point and Laurence Bond - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. In December the Platform published an infographic leaflets and posters on the Equal Right to Health for All.



In advance of Budget 2018 the Platform published its Four Tests for Budget 2018 which are:

- Will Budget 2018 redistribute income towards the poorest 20%?
- Will Budget 2018 strengthen access to quality employment?
- Will Budget 2018 restore and strengthen public services which are of particular importance to people on low income?
- Will the impact of Budget 2018 be assessed to ensure that all provisions reduce poverty and inequality?

Through the Community and Voluntary Pillar the Community Platform also participated in a number of bilateral meetings with different Government Departments.

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 members of the Alliance are: Age and Opportunity; Disability Federation of Ireland; Environmental Pillar; EAPN Ireland; Irish Rural Link; Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed; National Adult Literacy Agency; Cooperative Housing Ireland; National Women's Council of Ireland; SIPTU; Society of St Vincent de Paul and Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice Ireland. During 2017 the Alliance published its response to the European Commission's 2017 Country Report for Ireland, which it circulated widely, and also met with the European Semester Officer in the European Commission office in Dublin to present the report. In October the Alliance met with the European Commission fact-finding mission from Brussels to present its analysis of social, economic and environmental issues related to the European Semester process and Europe 2020 strategy.

Coalition 2030



EAPN Ireland is an active member of the Irish Coalition of civil society organisations which has come together to ensure that Ireland is effectively implementing policies to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Ireland. The Coalition was officially launched in March 2017 and during the year Robin Hanan was a member of the Coalition's steering group.

The Coalition includes domestic anti-poverty and equality organisations, Trade Unions, international NGOs and environmental organisations. The Coalition website is www.ireland2030.org.

Other Alliances

EAPN Ireland is also a member of the Equality and Rights Alliance and the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Initiative.

4. The organisation

Membership

Despite major changes in the community sector, particularly over the past 10 years, EAPN Ireland has over 200 members. These members are organisations and individuals committed to ending the causes and consequences of poverty.

Board

The Board of EAPN Ireland plays an important role in providing leadership to the organisation and met six times during 2017, including for one strategic planning meeting in March with an external facilitator.

Board Members during this period were:

- Aiden Lloyd (The Rights Platform)
- Anne Loftus (Clare, Chairperson)
- Farai Calvin Jeyacheya (Zimbabwe Heritage Trust)
- Joan O'Donnell (Disability Federation of Ireland)
- Loraine Mulligan (SIPTU, Vice Chair)
- Maureen Ward (Offaly Travellers Movement) - Stepped down in 2017
- Michael Mackey (Galway Simon Communities)
- Michelle Kearns (National Traveller MABS, Treasurer) - Joined in 2017
- Pat Doyle (Peter McVerry Trust) - Stepped down in 2017
- Philip O'Connor (Dublin) - Stepped down in 2017
- Tess Murphy (Longford Women's Link and rep on EAPN Europe Executive)

We would like to thank Maureen Ward, Pat Doyle and Philip O'Connor (former Chairperson), who stepped down in 2017, for their great contributions to the development of EAPN Ireland.

Staff

In 2017 EAPN Ireland had three part-time staff:

- Robin Hanan, Director
- Paul Ginnell, Policy Officer
- Maureen Gondipon, Administration and Finance Officer

Between September and November 2017 the EAPN Ireland team was joined by François De Ganck who made a great contribution during his 10 week internship.

In December Robin Hanan retired after tirelessly working both in EAPN Ireland, and other organisations, for an end to poverty and its root causes. Robin was Coordinator of EAPN Ireland between 1999 and 2007 and returned as Director in 2012. We know he will continue to work for change. Paul Ginnell took up the role of Director on January 1st 2018.

Funding

EAPN Ireland is in the middle of three years of core funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNOs), which is administered by Pobal. This funding is crucial to our ability to operate. In 2017 we also had income from a number of other sources. This includes funding through EAPN (Europe) from the European Commission to contribute to its work on the Europe 2020, the European Minimum Income Network and support participation in the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty; Irish Aid for the Connecting the Dots training project on the Sustainable Development Goals; Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to support preparation meeting and participation in the Social Inclusion Forum; the Carnegie Trust, via the Wheel, for a report on Financial Exclusion, which will be published 2018; the European Parliament office also via the Wheel, for the workshops on the European Parliament and Social Europe, and the Department of the Rural and Community Development who provide some funding for the Community Platform.

EAPN Ireland CLG is core funded by the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development through Pobal.



Department of Rural and
Community Development

*An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail*

