



European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland

Annual Report 2018

Draft for AGM 2019

Ireland

Introduction

While poverty levels in Ireland and the EU have begun to fall from the height of the crisis, the number of people in poverty is still very high levels and major challenges remain in addressing its structural causes. Housing and homelessness have remained as the greatest challenges for Ireland with over 10,000 adults and children in homelessness, but other issues also need to be addressed. This includes the inadequacy of income, whether in and out of work; lack of investment in affordable quality services; and addressing problems around decent work. These issues particularly impact on some groups and communities. This meant that 2018 was another busy year for EAPN Ireland both at national and EU level.

There were two main priorities for EAPN Ireland throughout 2018.

The first priority was to work with like-minded organisations to campaign for access to an adequate social welfare for all who need it. This is because many people in Ireland and across the EU continue to live on incomes which are not adequate for them to live with dignity. The campaign was part of a Europe wide action aimed at ensuring that everyone has an income which enables them to live with dignity. While some progress is being made in Ireland, this will continue to be a priority over the coming years. The second priority was to ensure the Government made good on its commitment to publish a new all-of-Government social inclusion plan, and to lobby to make sure it was an effective plan. The focus would then move to ensuring delivery. However, the publication of the plan had been delayed until 2019. In the meantime, we are continuing to engage with the Government to push for delivery on its existing poverty reduction targets.

The policy of the European Union has the potential to impact in both a positive and negative way on society in Ireland. Therefore, EAPN Ireland continues to play an active member of our European network. This is to ensure that EU policy supports the delivery of more inclusive, equal and poverty free societies across Europe. The publication of the European Pillar of Social Rights at the end of 2017 is a positive development, and in 2018 the focus was on how this Pillar could be made more real in the lives of people. There continues to be concerns about the impact of the increasing support for far-right politics across the EU and the European Parliament elections in 2019 will be an important moment in determining the direction of the EU over the coming years. EAPN will be working to ensure people vote for EU values which are of respect for human rights and human dignity, equality and solidarity.

Working with like-minded organisations continues to be an important means through which EAPN Ireland works to bring about change. Apart from working with colleagues across the EU through EAPN (Europe) we continue to act as secretariat for the Community Platform and to coordinate the Better Europe Alliance and the network of organisations working to ensure access to adequate social welfare supports for all. We are also members of Coalition 2030, a civil society alliance working for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Ireland, and the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Alliance.

EAPN Ireland was also involved in many other activities during 2018, all of which are outlined in this Annual Report. In 2019 we continue to work towards our vision of a sustainable Ireland and Europe free of poverty and social exclusion, with high levels of equality, where political, economic, social and cultural rights are respected.

1. Campaigns, Advocacy and Empowerment

Access to an adequate social welfare for all

During 2019 EAPN Ireland increased its focus on the need for access to an adequate social welfare for all who need it. The two main actions were the events linked to the visit of the European Minimum Bus to Ireland in May and the campaign for the benchmarking of social welfare against a level that enables people to live with dignity. To coordinate this work EAPN Ireland facilitated a network to come together involving All Together in Dignity Ireland, Focus Ireland, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, National Youth Council of Ireland, One Family, SIPTU, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice.

- **European Minimum Income Network (EMIN) Bus tour visits Ireland**

Over 64 days between April and June 2019 two EMIN buses visited 32 countries to raise awareness and debate about the importance of everyone having a guaranteed social welfare for a decent life. It was Ireland's turn in May and between the 17th and 22nd May the EMIN bus was welcomed to Limerick, Longford and Dublin with events organised to engage the public on the streets and workshops to encourage debate. The workshops involved contributions from those living on social welfare, local and national politician, representatives from the Department of Employment Affairs, IBEC and community organisations.



Above: The EMIN Bus on the move



Left: Some of the group involved in engaging the public outside the GPO in Dublin

- **Campaign for the benchmarking of social welfare**

This is an ongoing campaign which involved the coming together of organisations concerned that social welfare levels are inadequate for people to live with dignity. This inadequacy is very much linked to the cost of living in Ireland, particularly of services such as housing and childcare. The main demand from the campaign is for social welfare to be set at a level which is adequate to lift people above the poverty line and meet a Minimum Essential Standard of Living, as developed by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice.

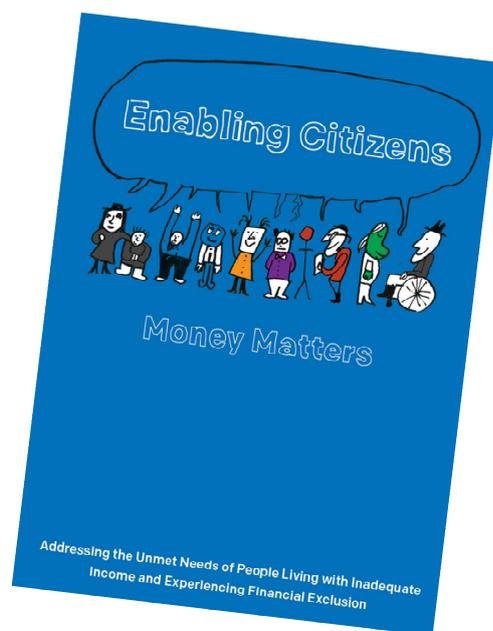


In 2018 the group agreed a leaflet (right) to communicate its message to the public while lobbying Government, the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) and opposition spokespersons. The campaign of the group contributed to the benchmarking of social welfare at an adequate level being a key recommendation from the DEASP Pre-Budget Forum in July. In December 2018 The Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Act 2018 was signed into law and included a commitment from the Government to consult on the benchmarking of social welfare in early 2019. The network will now focus its energy on influencing the outcome of this process to ensure it results in a level of income that enables people to live in dignity.

- **Financial Exclusion**

During 2017 EAPN Ireland carried out research on Financial exclusion. The research focused on the reality of people living on inadequate incomes and who were experiencing financial exclusion. The research was funded by Carnegie Trust via the Wheel and carried out on behalf of EAPN Ireland by Audry Deane. It was launched at the Wheel conference in May 2018.

The report highlights the impact that lack of an adequate income has on people and how this is addressed, including for many by ending up in unsustainable debt. It then looks at the additional level of exclusion faced by those who do not have access to basic banking facilities. It concludes with a series of proposals to address these issues making the connection to the need for financial inclusion to be addressed within an integrated anti-poverty strategy.



An effective anti-poverty strategy for Ireland

For the past number of years EAPN Ireland has been campaigning for a new, all-of-Government anti-poverty strategy. This is to replace the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 and the Updated Plan from 2015-2017 and the Government has committed to delivering this strategy. We have engaged in the ongoing consultation process, including in two national Social Inclusion Forums and contributing to an online consultation as well as making submissions and meeting with Department officials. EAPN Ireland has criticised the inadequacy of the consultation process for the new strategy which is now promised for 2019.

EAPN Ireland has continued to highlight issues around poverty in Ireland and to push for existing plans and commitments to be implemented effectively. The following are some of the key actions taken by EAPN Ireland in 2018 to achieve an effective anti-poverty strategy.

• Poverty Briefing 2018



In January 2018 EAPN Ireland published its Poverty Briefing 2018. The Briefing outlines the current situation in Ireland in relation to poverty presenting the main issues in relation to income, inequality, employment, housing and homelessness, disability, migration and other areas and presents proposals for and new anti-poverty strategy. The 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, focusing on taxes

• Social Inclusion Forum 2018

The Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) is organised annually with the aim of bringing different stakeholders together, including those experiencing poverty and social exclusion, to support the monitoring of Ireland's social inclusion strategy. The 2018 Social Inclusion Forum took place on the 10th May in the Aviva Stadium in Dublin under the theme 'Social Inclusion in a Changing Environment'. As in previous years EAPN Ireland teamed up with Community Work Ireland (CWI) to organise local preparatory meetings. One hundred and eight people attended the six local meetings which took place in counties Clare, Cork, Letterkenny, Monaghan, Tipperary and Wicklow.



Above: Participants attending SIF Pre-meeting in Letterkenny



Above: Participants at the Forum on 10th May

EAPN Ireland and CWI also supported a group of participants from the local meetings to attend the Forum and participate directly in presenting the report from the local preparatory meetings in the presence of the Minister for Social Protection, Regina Doherty. The report from the workshops highlighted the broad range of issues that were raised across many areas but in particular the importance of the Government putting in place and implementing the policies needed to address poverty in all its dimensions.

Progressing Economic Social and Cultural Rights

- **Recognition of Socio-economic Status as a Ground for Discrimination**

As it stands, Ireland's equality legislation does not recognise or protect those who are the discriminated against because they are from a disadvantaged community or living on a low income. In June the AGM workshop was entitled 'Socio-economic status as a ground for discrimination'. The workshop heard from some who had experienced discrimination because of their social background and what it meant to them. It heard of the work of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Initiative which has been lobbying for legal recognition of discrimination on the basis of socio-economic status and has been supporting an opposition Bill to address this which is currently stuck in the Dail legislative process. Delegates agreed that it unacceptable that someone who has been discriminated against because of their socio-economic background can do nothing about it and that EAPN Ireland should increase its work to ensure the legislation is put in place to address it. Following the AGM EAPN Ireland has published statements and lobbied the Minister and the Department of Justice and Equality to progress the recognition of socio-economic status as a ground for discrimination in Irish law.

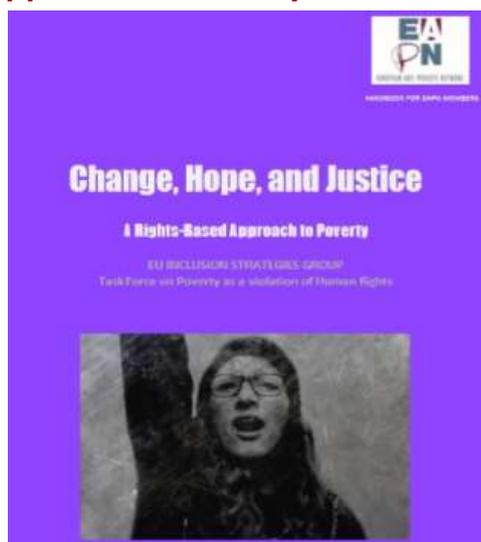
- **European Pillar of Social Rights**

In November 2017 the European Pillar of Social Rights was agreed by all EU leaders, including the Taoiseach. It includes 20 right and principles in the areas of employment and social rights that have to be implemented by all EU Member States, including Ireland. During 2018 EAPN Ireland worked to support its implementation. It met with officials in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection who are responsible for its implementation and to mark its first anniversary issued a briefing and press release in November 2018. It has also been working to support its implementation through the European Semester process and through its work on access to an adequate social welfare.

- **EAPN Handbook on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Poverty**

In 2018 EAPN (Europe) published Change, Hope & Justice a Handbook on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Poverty. The handbook was mainly developed as a resource for EAPN members, but is useful for all organisations working to end poverty. It aims at elaborating on the relation between poverty and Human Rights in Europe, to deepen EAPN’s understanding of poverty and social exclusion as a violation of Human Rights, and to strengthen members’ capacity to act against poverty and Human Rights violations.

The Handbook was developed by a Task Force of EAPN members, including Aiden Lloyd from EAPN Ireland.



Engaging with socially excluded families – Learning from Spanish experience



Above: Spanish and Irish delegates at the PACT seminar

In September EAPN Ireland hosted a seminar of the EU funded PACT Initiative. PACT (Pro-Active Case-based Targeted model) is a pilot project in the Spanish region of Castilla y León looking at 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. PACT is Coordinated by EAPN in Castilla y León and brings together local authorities, universities and other agencies. EAPN Ireland is one of the transnational partners for the project and the seminar in Dublin looked at how the learning from the project relates to practice and experience in Ireland.

Giving voice to People Experiencing Poverty in the EU

After preparing for a number of months the Irish delegation attended to 2018 EU Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty in Brussels in November. The focus for the 2018 meeting was on education under the title ‘Poverty and Access to Education: Let’s make education a way out of poverty’. The Irish delegates who attended the Meeting were Alice Kelly from Glenshane Women’s Group and Paul Uzell from All Together in Dignity Ireland. Alphonse Basogomba from Irish Development Education Centre did all the preparation with the group but was unable to attend. Aiden Lloyd, a Board member of EAPN Ireland is the Irish coordinator for the Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty.



Left: Alice Kelly (right) at the flash mob which took place during the Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty in Brussels.



Right: Paul Uzell at the Meeting.

European Semester and Europe 2020 Strategy

Since 2010 most of the EU's engagement with its Member States on both its economic and social goals has been through what is called the European Semester. This includes the delivery on the poverty target in the Europe 2020 strategy and for the first time in 2018 also includes the monitoring on the implementation on the European Pillar of Social Rights. The overall process has been difficult and in the initial years during the economic crisis resulted in increased poverty both in Ireland and throughout the EU. While there has been some recent progress, there are still 113 million people in poverty and social exclusion in the EU including almost 321,000 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. In April 2018 EAPN Ireland made its annual submission to the National Reform Programme. Much of the work of EAPN Ireland on the Semester and Europe 2020 is through the Better Europe Alliance, which is Co-ordinated by EAPN Ireland.

Summary of Publications and Submissions in 2018

- **70th Anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights December 2018**
On UN Human Rights Day the statement from EAPN Ireland highlighted that 70 years after the signing of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights are still an ongoing issue facing those most marginalised in Irish society.
- **Press Release on the Survey of Income and Living Conditions, 2017 December 2018**
In December the Central Statistics Office published the latest information on income and poverty in the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2017. In its press release in response to the survey EAPN Ireland highlighted that the report showed that people living in poverty are not seeing the recovery.

- **Briefing note on the European Pillar for Social Rights, November 2018**
On the first anniversary of the European Pillar for Social Rights (November 17th), EAPN Ireland published a Briefing note on the Pillar and what it represents.
- **Submission to Budget 2019 June 2018**
The submission to Budget 2019 called for adequate and progress taxation, effective poverty proofing, the benchmarking of social welfare at a level of adequacy and investment in quality services.
- **Better Europe Alliance Response to European Commission 2018 Country Report for Ireland April 2018**
In its analysis to the Commission's 2018 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 a better and more sustainable future for everyone.
- **Summary of Regional Workshops for 2018 Social Inclusion Forum May 2018**
This report outlines the issues and proposals arising from regional workshops and a focus group and was presented to the participants at the Social Inclusion Forum in May.
- **Submission to National Reform Programme 2018 April 2018**
The submission provided an analysis of how Ireland is performing against the targets it has set under Europe 2020 strategy, including targets for poverty reduction. It outlined the policy changes needed to achieve this and the other targets in a way which benefits all in society.
- **Submission to the Consultation on a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion March 2018**
The submission to the new plan highlighted the need to maintain ambitious targets, matched by an ambitious and integrated set of policies to address the root causes and impact of poverty.
- **Poverty Briefing 2018 and proposals for a new Anti-Poverty Strategy February 2018**
The EAPN Ireland Poverty Briefing 2018 presents up to date information on the levels of poverty, the issues behind them and the impact on people's lives. It presents proposals for an integrated plan to address poverty.

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.

EAPN (Europe)

Since its foundation in 1990 EAPN Ireland has been an active member of the European network of EAPN and this continued in 2018. EAPN (Europe) currently has a membership of 31 national networks and 17 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 and its causes.

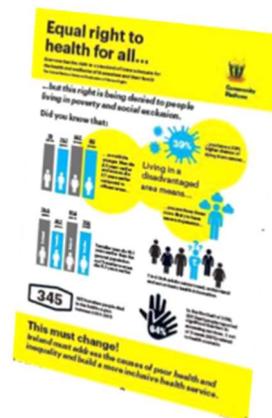
After six years of commitment to effectively representing EAPN Ireland on the EAPN (Europe) Executive Committee (Board) Tess Murphy was succeeded by Joan O'Donnell who is now finding her feet. Paul Ginnell continued to represent EAPN Ireland on the European network's policy group (EU Inclusion Strategies Group), but in October stepped down as co-chair of this group after six years.

In October 2018, Joan, Paul and EAPN Ireland chair Ann Loftus represented EAPN Ireland at the European Network's General Assembly (AGM) in Vienna. The General Assembly included further work on EAPN Europe's strategic plan, which is well progressed.

Community Platform

Since 2012 EAPN Ireland has supported the coordination of the Community Platform and continued to do so in 2018.

The Platform has been working on the issue of health inequality and as part of this launched a leaflet and poster on the Equal Right to Health for All. In 2018 the Platform continued its work on health.



The issue of compliance with governance and other reporting requirements is of major concern to organisations in the community and voluntary sectors. In April the Community Platform brought together organisations with many of those state bodies responsible for ensuring compliance across a range of areas. These bodies included the Charities Regulator, the Data Protection Commissioner, the Standards in Public Office Commission and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. The discussion helped organisations get clarity on the requirements but also made the point to the agencies that while organisations respected the importance of the different requirements, compliance has also placed an accumulative burden on them which takes increasing amounts of time and resources away from the core work of the organisations.

In September the Platform published its Four Tests for Budget 2019. The Four Tests are:

- Will Budget 2019 redistribute income towards the poorest 20%?
- Will Budget 2019 strengthen access to quality employment?
- Will Budget 2019 restore and strengthen public services which are of particular importance to people on low income?
- Will the impact of Budget 2019 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.

Economic Social and Cultural Rights Initiative

EAPN Ireland is a member of the Economic Social and Cultural Rights Initiative. In December the Economic Social and Cultural Rights Initiative joined the Community Platform for the 'Declaring our Human Rights' event to mark December the 70th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

At the event Irene Byrne, the EAPN Ireland Policy and Communications Officer, was one of those who highlighted the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

The 'Declaring our Human Rights' event also marked the final action of the Economic Social and Cultural Rights Initiative which brought together EAPN Ireland and a range of other organisations seeking to progress the decision of the Constitutional Convention to include Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the Irish Constitution.



Above: Irene Byrne presenting UNCHR Article 22 on the Right to social security

Below: Participants at the event which involved, statements, poems, songs and symbolic action to mark the 70th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights



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; Cooperative Housing Ireland; Disability Federation of Ireland; Environmental Pillar; EAPN Ireland; Irish Rural Link; Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed; National Adult Literacy Agency; National Women's Council of Ireland; SIPTU; Society of St Vincent de Paul and Social Justice Ireland. During 2018 the Alliance published its response to the European Commission's 2018 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 the Europe 2020 strategy.

Coalition 2030



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. During 2018 the Coalition published its assessment of Ireland's progress in implementing the SDGs. In July the Coalition sent representatives to New York to participate in the UN High Level Political Forum at which Ireland was among the Governments reporting on their progress in implementing the SDGs.

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

Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development



After a lot of detailed planning the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development (SWSD) took place in Ireland in July 2018. The focus of the Conference was on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This conference, led by three international alliances of social workers, was attended by 2,500 participants. It was led in Ireland by a partnership of the Irish Association of Social Workers, EAPN Ireland and four universities.

3. The Organisation

Membership

Despite major changes in the community sector, particularly over the past 10 years, EAPN Ireland has over 170 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 seven times during 2018, including for one strategic planning meeting in October with an external facilitator.

Board Members during this period were:

- Aiden Lloyd (The Rights Platform)
- Alphonse Basogomba (Intercultural and Diversity Education Centre – Ireland)
- Anne Loftus (Galway Theatre for Change, Chairperson)
- Farai Calvin Jeyacheya (Zimbabwe Heritage Trust)
- Joan O'Donnell (Disability Federation of Ireland and rep on EAPN Europe Executive)
- Loraine Mulligan (SIPTU)
- Michael Mackey (Galway Simon Communities)
- Michelle Kearns (National Traveller MABS, Vice Chair)
- Sive Bresnihan (Comhlámh, Treasurer) – Joined in 2018
- Tess Murphy (Longford Women's Link)

In 2018 EAPN Ireland formally signed up to the voluntary Governance Code and began the process of reviewing and updating its governance policies and procedures.

Staff

In 2018 EAPN Ireland had three part-time staff:

- Paul Ginnell, Director
- Irene Byrne, Policy and Communications Officer
- Maureen Gondipon, Administration and Finance Officer

Following the retirement of Robin Hanan at the end of 2017 Paul Ginnell was appointed as Director in January 2018. Paul had been working as Policy Officer since 2005. In March Irene Byrne joined the team as Policy and Communications Officer. Maureen Gondipon has continued to work at the heart of the organisation as Administration and Finance Officer.

Communications

EAPN Ireland recognises the importance of communicating with its members, the wider public and policy makers. While overall resources have not changed, Irene Byrne was recruited in March as Policy and Communications Officer, bringing a clearer focus on communications. This will enable EAPN Ireland to strengthen our communications as an important tool in bringing about social change.

During 2018 we continued to produce the NewsFlash e-newsletter which goes to almost 1,000 recipients to update them on activities of EAPN Ireland and our European network as well as including other national and European news. EAPN Ireland maintained its Facebook presence while greatly enhancing its presence on Twitter. There were also a number of Press releases throughout the year. The EAPN Ireland website www.eapn.ie is being redeveloped and the new website will go live in 2019.

Funding

EAPN Ireland receives its core funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNOs). This scheme is administered by Pobal. The funding is for a 3-year period from mid-2016 to mid-2019. Having access to this funding is crucial to the ability to operate and enables us to bring in additional funding for activities.

In 2018 this additional funding included funding through EAPN (Europe) to contribute to our work on the Europe 2020 strategy and European Semester and support participation in the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty; the European Minimum Income Network provided funding to work on the issue of access to an adequate social welfare for all; the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection supported the preparatory meetings and participation in the Social Inclusion Forum; the Carnegie Trust, via the Wheel, funded the report on Financial Exclusion; the Spanish PACT project included funding to support transnational engagement as part of their project on a new approach to engage with socially excluded families and the Department of the Rural and Community Development continued to provide funding for the Community Platform.

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

EAPN Ireland, 100 North King Street, Dublin 7

Tel: 353 (1) 8745737

Email: enquiries@eapn.ie

Web: www.eapn.ie

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

