



European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland

Annual Report 2020

A JUST
RECOVERY
FOR ALL

Introduction

2020, a year which marked 30 years since the foundation of EAPN Ireland and the wider European network, was dominated by the impact of Covid-19 pandemic and the measures to control and unfortunately served to highlight the importance of the Network to address the structural causes of poverty.

The pandemic has impacted on people's lives in a way that has changed the very basis of what people considered normality. It has also reinforced and made all the clearer the inequalities that exist at national, European and global levels and creates the conditions for poverty to exist.

Covid-19, and measures to control it, have had a particular direct and indirect impact on the most marginalised and at risk of poverty and social exclusion in our society.

Among those directly impacted by the virus has been people in overcrowded accommodation including Travellers, people in direct provision centres and people in emergency accommodation. It has also impacted on essential workers many of whom are in low paid sectors and many of whom have lost their jobs, either temporarily or permanently.

The European Commission has predicted that Covid-19 will result in a large increase in poverty if preventive action is not taken. In Ireland its impact can clearly be seen in many communities across the country where growing numbers of people have fallen further into deep poverty become dependent on charities and community organisations to meet their food and other basic needs. While this dependency has grown due to Covid-19 measures, it was a reality of many beforehand and highlights the need to ensure that everyone has an adequate income to live with dignity.

EAPN, but in Ireland and at European level has shown how Covid-19 has reinforced how inequality and poverty impacts on people's lives and along with others across civil society made strong demands that we do not go back to the way things were before this crisis but need to 'build back better'. This involves ensuring that everyone has an adequate income to meet the cost of living, can access quality public services and that those who can work can have a decent job. It also involves respecting the dignity of everyone irrespective of their identity or background and enabling those experiencing poverty and social exclusion can have a collective voice. In the past year we have witnessed the Government moving fast to implement major policy changes, thought before to be impossible, so we know that this change is possible, if the will is there.

In 2021 the Government will outline its path for recovery, including in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. This pathway must ensure that the recovery addresses the root causes of poverty, inequality and exclusion for all communities. It must support delivery on commitments in the Roadmap for Social Exclusion, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. This inclusive recovery must be supported by the EU institutions and reflected across Europe.

At a practical level EAPN Ireland staff, like those in many organisations, spent the majority of 2020 working remotely. Despite this, the Annual Report shows the high level of work carried out by the network over the year. In this work we value the engagement of our members, and the joint work with other organisations also working for changes to the structural causes of poverty.

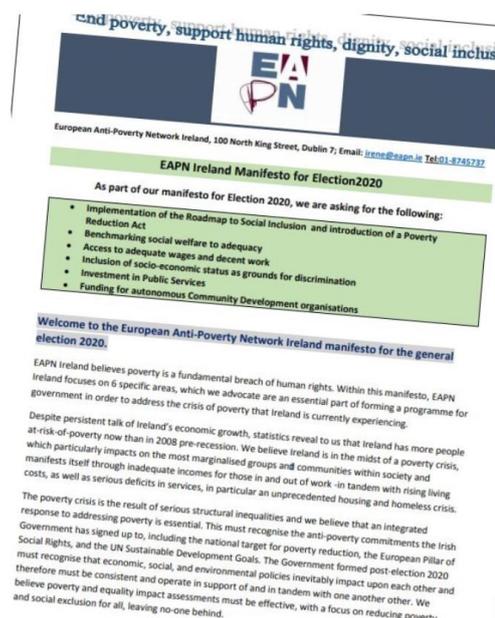
1. Policy and Advocacy and Campaigns

Elections 2020

Early 2020 was dominated by Elections 2020 and the process for forming a new Government in the wake of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

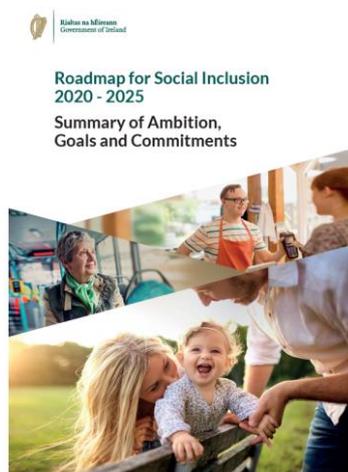
EAPN Ireland focused its engagement initially on the manifestos of political parties. Our manifesto focused on the following priorities:

- Implementation of the Roadmap to Social Inclusion and introduction of a Poverty Reduction Act
- Benchmarking social welfare to adequacy
- Access to adequate wages and decent work
- Inclusion of socio-economic status as grounds for discrimination
- Investment in Public Services
- Funding for autonomous Community Development organisations



After the elections attention turned to seeking to influence to Programme for Government. EAPN Ireland wrote to the leaders of all political parties asking them to prioritise the elimination of poverty and social exclusion in their negotiations for a Programme for Government. The network also initiated a letter from a range of community and voluntary organisations for the inclusion of socio-economic status as ground for discrimination within Irish equality legislation, as part of the new Programme for Government. While this campaign was successful EAPN Ireland's statement following the publication of the final Programme for Government in June highlighted the network's disappointment with the failure of the Programme to commit to income adequacy for those on social welfare.

An effective anti-poverty strategy for Ireland



After a long wait for a new anti-poverty strategy, and as a final act before leaving office, the Irish Government finally published the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 in January 2020. The Roadmap contains the overall target 'To reduce the national consistent poverty rate to 2% or less of the population' by 2025 and 'to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive States in the EU'. EAPN Ireland released a statement welcoming its publication but questioning the failure to commit to the benchmarking of social welfare rates to adequacy.

A Steering group has been set up to oversee the implementation of the Roadmap and EAPN Ireland is represented as one of the three external members.

Unfortunately, there was no Social Inclusion Forum in 2020 as this is an opportunity to bring stakeholders together to review Government's commitments and policy to address poverty and social exclusion. A Forum is expected to take place early in 2021. While the impact of Covid-19 will be an important consideration for the Forum and the implementation of the Roadmap, it should result in additional urgency to make progress on addressing the root causes of poverty and social exclusion which have been highlighted because of the pandemic.

Addressing the impact of Covid-19 and inequalities it has exposed

Unsurprisingly the Covid-19 pandemic and the Government's responses to it provided much of the focus for the work of EAPN Ireland during the year. This work involved engagement on the immediate impact of the virus and the Government's measures to control its spread, as well as proposals for measures at EU and national level to ensure that EU and national policy take account of their social impact while addressing the pre-existing inequalities exposed by the pandemic.

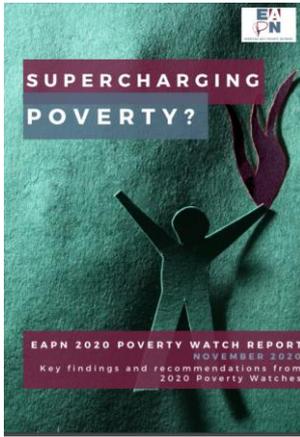
A key action was the publication of ***Rethinking a More Inclusive and Equal Ireland for 2020 and Beyond*** and advocacy around its main proposals. This publication highlighted poverty levels in Ireland as they were up to 2018 as well as the groups most impacted while focusing mainly on the key issues exposed due to Covid-19 making proposals for addressing them. These are issues highlighted by EAPN Ireland for many years and presented in the context of rights.

- The Right to Access Affordable and Quality Public Services
- The Right to Healthcare for all
- The Right to Housing for All
- The Right to Education for All
- The Right to Adequate and Accessible Social Welfare Supports
- The Right to Decent Work for All
- The Right to Access Adequate Wages
- The Right to Legislative Protection from Discrimination: Socio-economic Status
- The Right to Empowered and Active Community Development Organisations.



Rethinking a more Inclusive and Equal Ireland for 2020 and Beyond





This publication contributed to the EAPN (Europe) Poverty Watch for 2020 entitled 'Supercharging Poverty'.

EAPN Ireland also contributed to the EAPN (Europe) report, The impact of Covid-19 on people experiencing poverty and vulnerability, which drew on input from 25 EAPN national networks and three member European Organisations



EAPN Ireland made a number of submissions related to the recovery from Covid-19 including to Ireland's National Economic Plan and in early 2021 to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which will be the basis for drawing down EU funds from the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

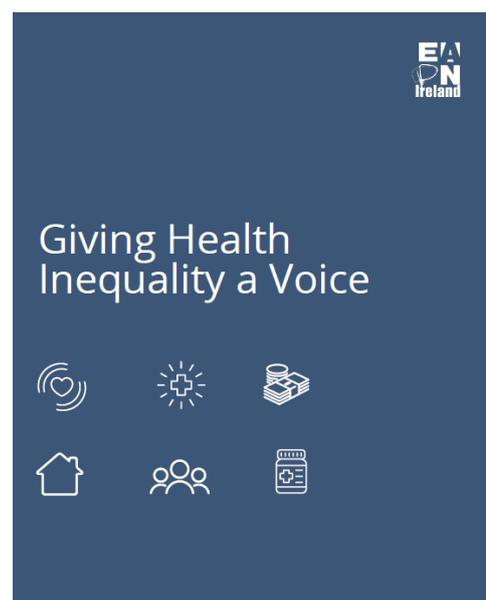
EAPN Ireland also worked closely with other organisations and allies across different sectors to address the short term impact of Covid-19 as well as in making proposals for Ireland's Recovery. All these alliances have lobbied and engaged with policy makers to progress these proposals. This includes:

- The Covid-19 NGO working group, a loose alliance of national and local community organisations, which produced a submission to Government on measures to improve outcomes for vulnerable communities;
- The Community Platform which published [Values for a Just Recovery](#)
- A coalition brought together by Stop Climate Chaos involving NGOs across a range of social, environmental and international development and trade unions, which published [A Shared Vision for a Just Recovery](#) that was signed by 60 organisations and platforms across the different sectors.

Giving Health Inequality a Voice

In 2019 EAPN Ireland received funding from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission for a project called *A community approach to addressing health inequalities and strengthening the Right to Health*. The project built on work done by the Community Platform on the equal right to health for all with the aim of improving how the main national health strategies address health inequality.

Audry Deane came on board to provide her expertise for the project and over 50 participants with a direct knowledge and experience of health inequality took part in community conversations in Longford Town, Knocknaheeny in Cork City, Donegal Town and Tallaght and the North Inner City in Dublin.





Alice Kelly from Fettercairn in Tallaght who participated in the community conversations and spoke at the launch of 'Giving Health Inequality a Voice' report.

Following the postponement of the launch in April 2020 the report 'Giving Health Inequality a Voice' was launched at an online event in September 2020. This event was attended by people from community organisations, including some of the participants from the community conversations, and representatives from the Department of Health and HSE leading on key national health strategies such as Healthy Ireland, Sláintecare and Sharing the Vision, Ireland's mental health policy.

Campaigns

While striving to ensure that policy to address poverty takes an integrated approach and addresses its structural causes, the network also continues to lobby and campaign for a number of specific policy reforms.

Benchmarking of social welfare to adequacy

The focus of this work is to ensure that people depending on social welfare have an income that allows them to live with dignity. The specific campaign is for *social welfare rates to be benchmarked at a level that is adequate to lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living*. In 2020 this has been part of our advocacy work linked to the General Election and the Programme for Government as well as in media and policy work linked to measures to address the impact of Covid-19 and for a just recovery.

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

Since the AGM in 2018 EAPN Ireland has been working alongside a number of other organisations to keep ongoing pressure for the introduction of Socio-economic status as a ground for discrimination in Irish equality legislation. The group successfully campaigned for a commitment to progressing this in the current Programme for Government and the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has committed to a public consultation. The group is not focusing on seeing these commitments progressed.

Other national policy Work

EAPN Ireland convenes a Policy Group of representatives from a number of organisations to help support the policy work for the network. During 2020 the Policy Group has a number of discussions, including on the issue of Basic Income. It also supported the network to produce submission.

During the year EAPN Ireland made submissions at national level to the Budget 2021, and attended to Pre-Budget Forum organised by the Department of Social Protection, as well as to the National Economic Plan, the National Reform Programme and the new National Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Inclusion Strategy.

European Pillar of Social Rights



The European Pillar of Social Rights was agreed by all EU leaders, including the Taoiseach in November 2017. It includes 20 rights and principles in the areas of employment and social rights that have to be implemented by all EU Member States. EAPN in Ireland and across Europe has been pushing for the strong implementation of the Pillar. Last year

EAPN Ireland updated its Briefing on the pillar and recirculated its video 'Know your Rights – The European Pillar of Social Rights' to raise awareness of its importance.

In 2020 the European Commission initiated a consultation for an Action Plan to implement the Pillar and EAPN actively participated in this consultation, making submissions and participating in events, including the European Commission's online consultation in Ireland. The implementation of the Pillar is of increased importance in the EU as the Europe 2020 strategy came to an end, and with it the EU target for reducing poverty and social exclusion. It is now the single most important commitment at EU level that can impact and poverty and social exclusion. The Action Plan is due to be published in March 2021.

Engaging with other European policy

Commitments at European level to reduce or end poverty have changed over the years. Since 2010 the EU has had a commitment to reduce the number of people at-risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU by 20 million (to 96 million) people by 2020. This commitment is part of the Europe 2020 Strategy which later became part of the European Semester process that was put in place to monitor the economic situation in EU countries, but was then expanded to include social and environmental monitoring. In 2018 the European Semester began to report on the implementation on the European Pillar of Social Rights. However, progress has been difficult and in 2018 there were still almost 110 million people in poverty and social exclusion in the EU including almost 280,000 people in consistent poverty in Ireland.

EAPN Ireland, as part of the wider network across Europe, engages in a detailed way with EU policy, and advocates tirelessly at EU and national level for delivery on existing commitments, and beyond.

In 2020 EAPN Ireland made its annual submission to the Irish National Reform Programme (NRP) and contributed to EAPN (Europe) analysis and policy on the European Semester and other policy developments. EAPN Ireland also continues to coordinate Better Europe Alliance, a cross-sectoral grouping of civil society organisations in Ireland working for progress on social and sustainable goals through the European Semester and the Europe 2020 strategy.

Summary of Publications and Submissions in 2020

- [Statement on Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025](#), *January 2020*
- [General Election Manifesto 2020](#), *January 2020*
- [Letter from Organisations commitment to progressing Socio-economic status as a ground for discrimination in Programme for Government](#), *February 2020*
- Letters to Party leaders on making the elimination of poverty a priority in Programme for Government, *April 2020*
- Statement: Income adequacy protects households from poverty, not only during COVID-19, *March 2020*
- [Better Europe Alliance response to European Commission 2020 Report on Ireland](#), *April 2020*
- [Submission to National Reform Programme 2020](#), *April 2020*
- [Statement on the Programme for Government](#), *June 2020*
- [Pre-Budget Submission 2021](#) and [Press Statements](#), *June and October 2020*
- [Rethinking a More Inclusive and Equal Ireland for 2020 and Beyond](#), *July 2020*
- [Submission to EU consultation on Action Plan for Implementation of European Pillar of Social Rights](#), *July 2020*
- [Statement on the CSO material deprivation statistics for 2019](#), *September 2020*
- [Giving Health Inequality a Voice Report](#), *October 2020*
- [Statement on CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2019](#) and [Briefing on 2019 Poverty and Income levels](#), *October 2021*
- [Updated Briefing on the European Pillar of Social Rights and Video](#), *November 2020*
- [Submission to National Economic Plan](#), *December 2020*
- [Briefing note on CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2019](#), *December 2020*
- [Submission to Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy](#), *December 2020*

2020 marked 30 years since the founding of the European Anti-Poverty Network, both in Ireland and across Europe. To mark this EAPN Ireland organised two online events.



For the first event EAPN Ireland teamed up with Theatre for Change Galway to

organise a Forum Theatre event entitled 'The Poor Will Always Be With Us ...'. This event also coincided with the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on the 17th October.

The event involved an interactive play and discussion where participants had an opportunity to explore how to better challenge and overcome the long existing barriers to ending poverty and social exclusion and to bringing about real social change.



The second event in November was a more formal conference called '**Poverty in Ireland and the EU – Past, Present and Future**'. It included inputs by

- Oliver De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights
- Fintan Farrell, Founding member of EAPN, Former Director of the Irish Traveller Movement and EAPN (Europe)
- Deirdre McCarthy – Policy and Research Coordinator, Dublin City Community Coop

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 is carried out by Irene Byrne, the Policy and Communications Officer.

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

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

A total of seven **Blogs** were published

- What would the old man in the Simpsons think? Poverty in Ireland and Europe, 1990-2020 – Brian Harvey
- Imagining a good life for everybody within planetary boundaries – Fintan Farrell
- Why families can't afford a house – Sharon Harty
- Will education and childcare receive additional investment as we emerge from the initial pandemic wave? - Aiden Lloyd
- The Impact of Covid 19 on North Clondalkin – Noreen Byrne
- Regaining Paradise – Aiden Lloyd
- Using the COVID-19 crisis to build a better future for all – Paul Ginnell



Six editions of the EAPN Ireland **NewsFlash** e-newsletter were published in 2020. 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. EAPN Ireland is also very active on Twitter.

There were also six special **Covid-19 Bulletins** in March and April to disseminate information the Government measures to address the pandemic and responses by community and voluntary sector, as well as advocacy work by EAPN Ireland to ensure Government and EU action protected the most vulnerable during the pandemic.

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 European network of EAPN and this continued in 2020. EAPN (Europe) currently has a membership of 32 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.

In 2020 Anne Loftus represented EAPN Ireland on the EAPN (Europe) Executive Committee (Board) of EAPN (Europe) and Paul Ginnell continued to represent EAPN Ireland on the European network's policy group (EU Inclusion Strategies Group). Aiden Lloyd is the Irish Coordinator for the European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty and Irene Byrne represented EAPN Ireland on the Communications Group of EAPN (Europe). All meetings during the year were online, including the General Assembly.

While continuing to keep a focus on its key policy priorities during 2020 a lot of EAPN's work during the year was informed by the impact of covid-19 on poverty. More at www.eapn.eu.



COMMUNITY PLATFORM
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY

Since 2012 EAPN Ireland has supported the coordination of the Community Platform and continued to do so in 2020. During the year it developed and disseminated its Manifesto for General Election 2020 and a number of key

short documents Values for a Just Recovery, Valuing Social Dialogue and Four Tests for Budget 2021.

General Election 2020

Community Platform Manifesto



Who we elect to represent us matters: what they stand for and their values are important. We want to elect political representatives who put people and communities first, who reflect the diversity of our society, and who can demonstrate that they will uphold our core values of: **Community, Participation, and Decency**. The Community Platform asks the candidates running for election to Dail Eireann how they will make these values a reality if elected.



COMMUNITY PLATFORM
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY

Valuing Social Dialogue

Social dialogue is part of a good democracy that functions for the benefit of all its citizens. To be effective and meaningful, social dialogue must involve participation of all sectors of society, including marginalised and excluded communities, in a genuine process of co-creation and co-monitoring of policy and practice. This is particularly important as we move forward in finding solutions to the current crisis, while addressing long



COMMUNITY PLATFORM
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY

Community Platform

Values for a Just Recovery

The COVID-19 Crisis is resulting in a tragic loss of life and is very damaging to families and communities, particularly for those who are most vulnerable in our society. This public health crisis has also led to an economic crisis with a large loss of jobs and



COMMUNITY PLATFORM - CHALLENGING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

a network of 30 national organisations working to address poverty, social exclusion, and inequality

Four Tests for Budget 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic has provided major social and economic challenges for Ireland and globally. It came at a time when some sectors and sections of our economy and society were recovering from the previous crisis. However, that

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.

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 2020 the Alliance published its response to the European Commission's 2020 Country Report for Ireland, which it circulated widely at national and EU level to influence the European Semester process in Ireland. In December the Alliance also made a submission on the European Semester to the Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and the Taoiseach.



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. The Coalition has ongoing engagement with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment which has responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the SDGs in Ireland. Following the restructuring of Government departments following the elections in 2020 the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications closed the Unit working on the Sustainable Development Goals. This results in no clear group of Government officials with responsibility for implementing the SDGs. It also meant that, unlike in previous years, there was no formal stakeholder engagement on the SDGs during 2020.

The Coalition includes domestic anti-poverty and equality organisations, Trade Unions, international development NGOs and environmental organisations. 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. The next stage in Ireland will be build ECOPPAM Ireland Platform to support its participation in the International Platform. More on www.ecoppam.com

3. The Organisation

Membership

EAPN Ireland has almost 170 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 2020.

Board Members during this period were:

- Aiden Lloyd (The Rights Platform – Vice-Chair)
- Alphonse Basogomba (Intercultural and Diversity Education Centre – Ireland)
- Anne Loftus (Theatre for Change Galway)
- Farai Calvin Jeyacheya (Zimbabwe Heritage Trust)
- James Cawley (Independent Living Movement Ireland)
- John Brennan (Irish Association of Social Workers)
- Loraine Mulligan (SIPTU)
- Michael Mackey (Galway Simon Communities)
- Michelle Kearns (National Traveller MABS - Chairperson)
- Sive Bresnihan (Comhlámh, Treasurer)
- Teresa Kearney (Longford Women’s Link)

In 2020 the Board concluded the process of reviewing and updating all governance policies and procedures which started in 2018.

Staff

EAPN Ireland has three part-time staff:

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

In October 2020 the team was joined for a three-month placement by Emma Hughes, a third year student in Community and Youth Work in the Department of Applied Social Studies in Maynooth University.

Funding

EAPN Ireland receives its core funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNOs). This funding runs for three years from mid-2019 to mid-2022. This core funding is critical to EAPN Ireland being able to operate and to draw in additional funding to run the organisation and organise activities.

During 2020 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 and from the Department of the Rural and Community Development continued to provide funding for the Community Platform. The Network also received the final part of its income from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission for the project on 'Giving a voice to health inequality'.

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.

EAPN Ireland, 100 North King Street, Smithfield, Dublin 7

Tel: 353 (1) 8745737

Email: enquiries@eapn.ie

Web: www.eapn.ie

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



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

