



European Anti-Poverty
Network Ireland

Annual Report 2021

Introduction

Over the past number of years, instability have become the norm as one form of crisis follows another.

When Covid-19 struck in 2020, the Irish Government and the EU seemed to finally stabilised themselves after the impact of the previous crisis The outgoing Government publishing the long-awaited Roadmap for Social Inclusion in January that year. In 2021 hope grew of a solution to the Covid-19 pandemic with the arrival of vaccines followed by the dominance of a less aggressive form of the virus. However, just as the pandemic receded it became clear that the initial increase in energy prices in 2021 was turning into a cost of living crisis, now reinforced by a completely unprovoked and catastrophic invasion of Ukraine by Russia, bringing with it a horrific impact on the Ukrainian people.

Each crisis has made life more difficult for people living in poverty and on low incomes, while equally slowing the progress needed by Government to address the root causes of inequality and poverty. By the end of 2021 there were ... at risk of poverty in Ireland and over one in five people living in the EU are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Throughout 2021 EAPN Ireland continued to push for an integrated approach to addressing the causes of poverty, while taking on board the lessons learned through the Covid-19 crisis. We worked to ensure the Government delivered on their commitments to poverty reduction while highlighting the need for the European Pillar of Social Right to be used as the standard to judge and guide all national and European policy.

Specifically, we continued to prioritise the need for everyone to have access to an adequate income, while also working on health inequality, for socio-economic status to be recognised as a ground in equality law.

At our 2021 AGM we again took up the conversation on the Future of Europe, with members clearly urging the EU to address social priorities, including an inclusive approach to the climate crisis, as the only way to ensure a sustainable future for everyone and avoiding the undermining of the vision of a peaceful and inclusive EU where everyone can have their dignity and rights respected.

As the worsening cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine dominate the opening to 2022, EAPN Ireland recognises the ongoing challenges that lie ahead in achieving our vision of a sustainable Ireland and Europe free of poverty and social exclusion, with high levels of equality and where political, economic, social and cultural rights are respected.

We remain committed to fighting for this vision and doing so alongside others who share it.

1. Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns

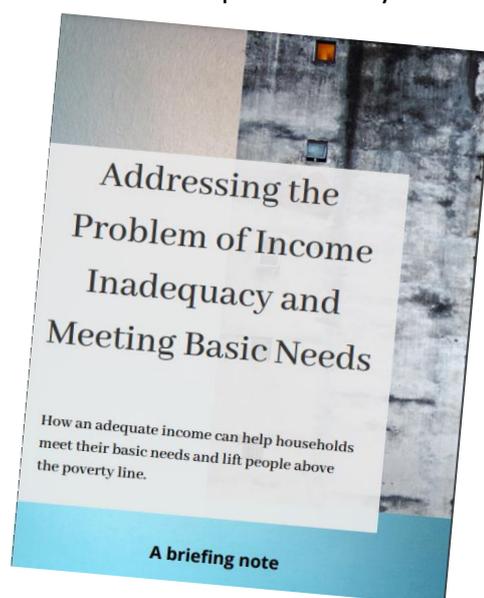
Cost of Living and growing dependence on charities to meet basic needs

Early in 2021 EAPN Ireland set up a Working Group of members and other key organisations to discuss the deepening levels of poverty in households which was showing itself through a growing dependence of people on charities, foodbanks and community and voluntary organisation more widely to meet their basic needs. The Working Group members clearly identified that this was a problem that preceded the Covid-19 pandemic and was closely linked to reality that the income of many people was not adequate to meet the cost of living. They were also clear that the dependence on these organisations was a sign of the failure of the social protection system and undermined people's dignity.

The Working Group published the briefing '[Addressing the Problem of Income Inadequacy and Meeting Basic Needs](#)'. The briefing presented some examples of the growing dependence on organisations, what they saw as the root causes and a number of key proposals for addressing it.

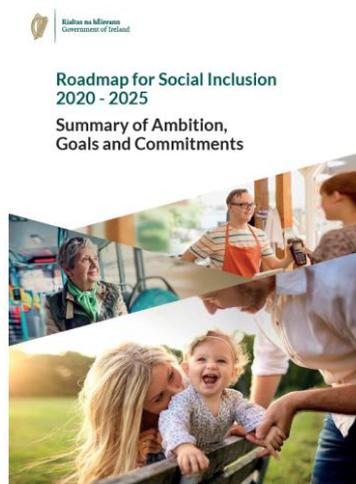
Later in 2021 EAPN Ireland received a grant from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to carry out research to look further at this growing problem. The research, which is being undertaken by TASC began in late 2021 involving focus groups and interviews and will be completed in 2022.

Given the increasing cost of living crises that became even more acute in late 2021 and into 2022, driven by the increased cost of fuel and energy, and most recently by the war in Ukraine, this research will be very timely.



Implementing an effective anti-poverty strategy for Ireland

Roadmap for Social Inclusion

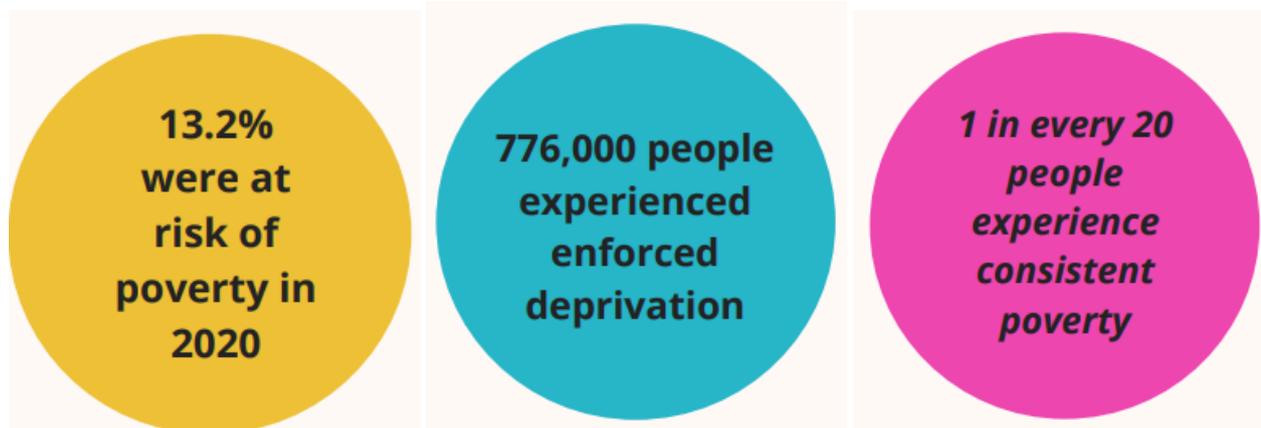


Following the publication of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 in early 2020 the focus moved to implementation. The Roadmap contains the overall target 'To reduce the national consistent poverty rate to 2% or less of the population' by 2025 and 'to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive States in the EU' and 68 commitments to deliver on this target.

Paul Ginnell, the Director of EAPN Ireland was appointed as one of three external members on the Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group, chaired by Joe O'Brien TD, Minister of State for Community Development and Charities. In order to facilitate

other Community and Voluntary Organisations to input to the implementation of the Roadmap, the three external members have set up a linkage group. Both groups met three times in 2021. Since its publication EAPN Ireland and other organisations have highlighted weaknesses in the Roadmap, which the Government has committed to reviewing in 2022.

In December 2021 the CSO published the poverty and income data for 2020 which showed that:



Social Inclusion Forum 2021

Following a gap in 2020, the Social Inclusion Forum returned online in 2021. Six separate sessions took place over the week of the 12th April.

In advance of the Forum 154 people attended four preparatory online thematic workshops organised by EAPN Ireland and Community Work Ireland (CWI). The four themes were core essentials, supporting families and children, expanding the opportunities for employment and ensuring the voices of marginalised communities are heard. 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.

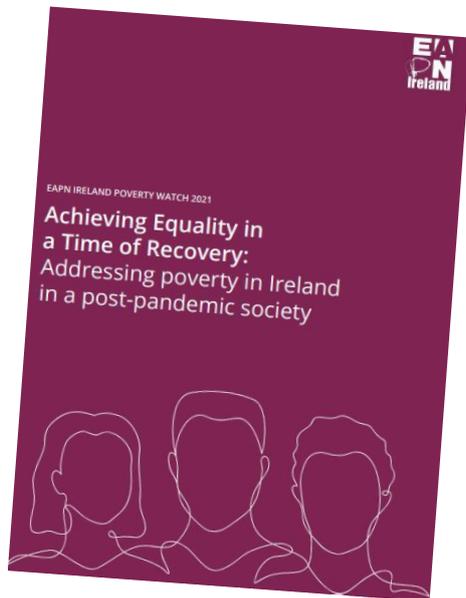
The impact of Covid-19

While the impact of Covid-19 and measures continued to dominate in 2021, the focus moved much more to recovery. At an EU level Governments were required to consult on the content of their Recovery and Resilience Plans for drawing down Recovery funds of which Ireland will receive €853 million of the €672.5 billion.

In order to support members to engage with the consultation EAPN Ireland published a [Briefing](#) which included information on how the Recovery Plans fit in with the existing European Semester process for reporting on economic and social progress including on the Pillar of Social Rights.



EAPN Ireland also made its own submission to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. The Plan was submitted to the European Commission in June 2021 with the majority of the funds allocated to climate and digital transition, with a limited amount for social measures.



In October EAPN Ireland published its Poverty Watch [Achieving Equality in a Time of Recovery: Addressing poverty in Ireland in a post-pandemic society](#). The Poverty Watch highlighted the current levels of poverty in Ireland, focusing on a number of areas including adequate income, housing, health, socio-economic discrimination and community development. It drew on the reality for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. It called on the Government to ensure that the post-pandemic recovery process would be one based on equality, social inclusion, and anti-poverty policies and initiatives, which would ensure that those who are furthest behind and those most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, would not be left behind once again.

In lobbying for a just recovery EAPN Ireland also worked with organisations across different sectors. In January EAPN Ireland was part of a delegation that met Minister Eamon Ryan and in July EAPN Ireland took an active role in the Coalition 2030 Conference 'A Just Recovery from Covid-19: How the Sustainable Development Goals can Guide Ireland's Recovery'. Mike Ryan from the World Health Organisations, Asad Rehman from War on Want and Paola Simonetti from the International Trade Union Confederation were the keynote speakers at this insightful event.

Giving voice to the reality of poverty at European level

Ensuring that those experiencing poverty and social exclusion have a voice in policy making is key to informing effective policy.

At EU level one of the key moments for engaging with policy makers on the issue of poverty is the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty which EAPN plays a central role in facilitating. After Covid resulted in no annual meeting taking place in 2020 for the first time since the Meetings began in 2001, an online Meeting took place in November 2021 with the title Recharging Social Europe! The Meeting focused on the four themes of minimum income, housing, health and digitalisation.



Paul Ginnell (Director EAPN Ireland), Paula Haverty Lesley O'Reilly, Alice Kelly, Gillian Stafford, Helena Power and Aiden Lloyd.

After three online preparatory meetings, the five Irish delegates met together in Dublin to remotely attend the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty with the 31 other national delegations and policy makers. The Irish delegates were Paula Haverty (Clondalkin CDP), Lesley O'Reilly (St Kevin's FRC Kilnamanagh, Co. Dublin), Alice Kelly (Glenshane Women's Group, Tallaght), Gillian Stafford (Independent Living Movement Ireland) and Helena Power (Kilkenny Traveller Movement). EAPN Ireland Board member Aiden Lloyd was the Irish Coordinator for the EU Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty who supported the delegates preparation and participation.

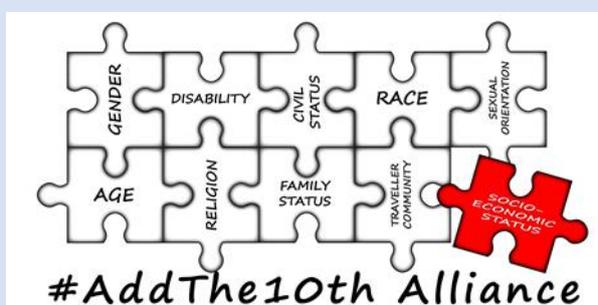
Campaigns

In 2021 EAPN Ireland continued to lobby and campaign for a number of specific policy reforms.

Benchmarking of social welfare to adequacy

The focus of this campaign is to ensure that everyone 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*. This proposal has now become a key policy demand across a number of different community and voluntary sector organisations. During 2021 this campaign was integrated across a number of different areas of work, including on proposals for Budget 2022. There were also meetings on the campaign with Joe O'Brien, Minister of State for Community Development and Charities and Sinn Fein Spokesperson on Social Protection Claire Kerrane TD linked to their proposal for a Social Welfare Commission.

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



EAPN Ireland continued to work with a number of other organisations to campaign for the introduction of Socio-economic status as a ground for discrimination in Irish equality legislation. This group which is now known as #AddThe10th Alliance met with Roderic O'Gorman the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in June and in November made a collective submission to the Government's consultation on the review of all Irish Equality law. This review specifically called for proposals for new equality grounds.

Other policy work

Policy Group: EAPN Ireland convenes a Policy Group of representatives from a number of organisations to help support the policy work for the network. During 2021 the Policy Group focused on the issue of adequate income, took up the issue of access to basic necessities, and contributed to a number of the network's policy submission.

Policy Submissions: During 2021 EAPN Ireland made submissions to Budget 2022, and attended the Pre-Budget Forum organised by the Department of Social Protection, to the consultation on the review of Equality Acts, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, the National Reform Programme and the National Minimum Wage.

Health Inequality: In 2020 EAPN Ireland published its report [Giving Health Inequality a Voice](#) based on five focus groups which were held across the country. Work continued on proposals from the report in 2021 with a follow-up meeting with Department of Health officials responsible for developing and implementing the Sláintecare and Health Ireland Strategies. Both strategies now have commitments and actions to tackle health inequality.



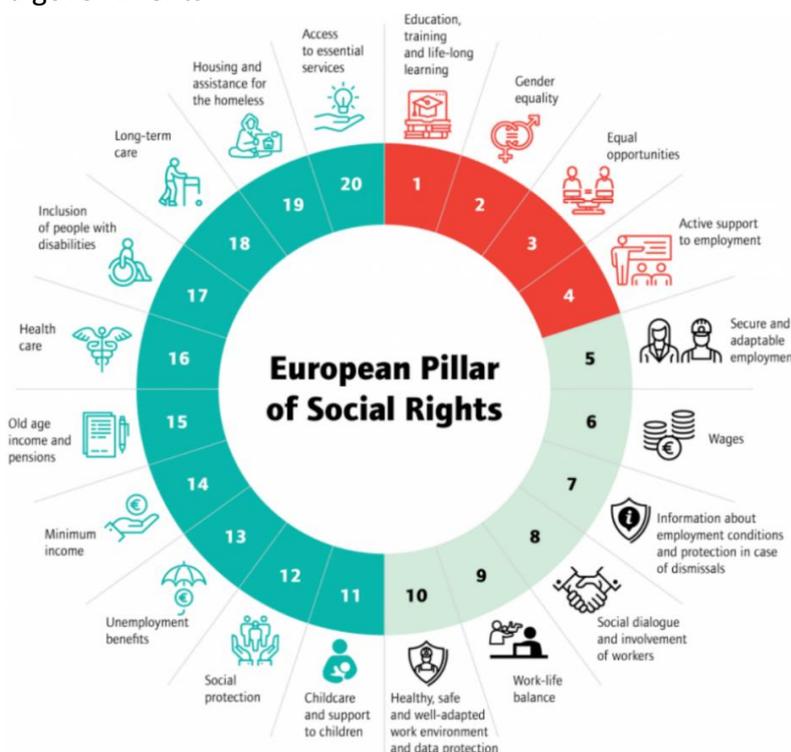
Future of Europe

Since 2017 the EU has been holding consultations on the Future of Europe. In 2021 it launched the Conference on the Future of Europe to get citizens views on the EU and changes they would like to see. As part of the AGM in September 2021, EAPN Ireland hosted a Workshop on the Future of Europe and following this worked with the Board and Policy Group to produce a [Position Paper on the Future of Europe](#). A members meeting will take place in January to present the Position Paper and encourage engagement with the Conference on the Future of Europe.



European Pillar of Social Rights

EAPN at national and European level has continued to focus on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights which was launched in 2017 with support from all EU institutions and governments.



In 2021 the big development was the publication of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Pillar. The Action Plan contains a plan for policy measures across many of the 20 principles of the Pillar including a commitment to a European Council Recommendation on Minimum Income. It also has three targets including a commitment to ‘Reduce by at least 15 million the number of people experiencing poverty or social exclusion by 2030 (must include 5 million children)’. EAPN Ireland was very

involved in the consultation on the Pillar and published a press statement on its publication expressing its disappointment on the lack of ambition. The network will continue to focus on the implementation of the Pillar.

Putting Poverty Back on the Agenda

In March EAPN Ireland collaborated with the Department of Applied Social Studies in Maynooth University to host an online seminar *Putting Poverty back on the Agenda: Community Work Responses to Emerging Issues*. The event looks at the experience from local, national and European levels to provide a space for practitioners and students to consider how community work can critically engage with, respond to and communicate about the reality of poverty. Inputs were from Magda Tancău, EAPN Europe, Noreen Byrne, North Clondalkin Community Development Project, Paul Ginnell, EAPN Ireland and Aiden Lloyd, The Rights Platform.

Summary of Publications, Submissions and Press Statements in 2021

- [Briefing Note](#) and [Submission to National Recovery and Resilience Plan](#), *February*
- [Statement on Action Plan for the Implementation of European Pillar of Social Rights](#), *March*
- [Submission on National Minimum Wage](#), *March*
- [Key Messages to Social Inclusion Forum from the Preparatory meetings](#), *April*
- [Submission to National Reform Programme](#), *April*
- [Briefing 'Addressing the Problem of Income Inadequacy and Meeting Basic Needs'](#) and [Press Statement on Briefing](#), *June*
- [Pre-Budget Submission 2022](#) and [Press Statement](#) after Budget announcement, *June and October*
- [Poverty Watch 2021 - Achieving Equality in a Time of Recovery](#), *October*
- [Submission to IHREC Statement of Strategy](#), *July*
- [Updated Briefing on the European Pillar of Social Rights and Video](#), *November*
- [Better Europe Alliance Submission to Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and Taoiseach Review of European Semester](#), *December*
- [Press Statement on Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2020](#), *December*
- [EAPN Ireland](#) and [Add the 10th Alliance Submissions on Review of Equality Acts](#), *December*
- [Position Paper on the Future of Europe](#), *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 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 three **press statements** on some of the key developments over the year and took part in a number of radio interviews.



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

A total of three **Blogs** were published

- Policy responses to the housing crisis – a road to nowhere? – Aiden Lloyd
- The pay divide and where worlds collide – Robert Carey
- Evidence-based Policy: Separating Science and Codology - Aiden Lloyd

Eight editions of the EAPN Ireland **NewsFlash e-newsletter** were published in 2021. 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 European network of EAPN and this continued in 2021. 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 2021 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.

Paul Ginnell represented the European Network as an expert on the European Commission's project on the development of a measurement of Absolute Poverty (ABSPO). The aim of the projects was to develop a way of identifying a monetary level, based on the cost of goods and services, below which people would be considered to be in absolute poverty.

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.



COMMUNITY PLATFORM
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY



Principles for delivering a high quality, inclusive and accessible Public Childcare Model

Since 2012 EAPN Ireland has supported the coordination of the Community Platform and continued to do so in 2021. During the year it developed and launched its Principles for a Public Childcare Model and its Four Tests for Budget 2022. The Platform continued to work on identifying how to improve how the state engages with the community and voluntary sector in a way that better addresses key issues and results in improved outcomes for those experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

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.



Principles

01 Child centred:
Putting children and their needs at the centre of policy and practice.

02 State responsibility:
State responsibility for delivering a publicly funded, not-for-profit childcare model.

03 Investment:
State investment in childcare must be based on international best practice.

04 Quality, inclusion and accessibility:
Putting quality, inclusion and accessibility at the heart of the model to ensure universal access to childcare which meets the needs of all children.

05 Equality:
ensuring better outcomes for children and families, especially for those on low incomes, those from minority and diverse communities and those experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

06 Decent working conditions:
Provide decent pay and working conditions for staff.

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 2021 the Alliance members engaged with the Recovery and Resilience Plans submitted to the Commission by the Irish Government and in December the Alliance made a collective input to the Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and the Taoiseach review of the European Semester process.

Foundations for Futures Europe Project



In 2021 EAPN Ireland was part of a successful group of partners to access funding under the EU's Europe for Citizens Programme. The six partners in the Foundations for Futures Europe partnership, led by Maynooth University, includes civil society and higher education partners from Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Serbia and Sweden. The aim of the project is to engage citizens in debates and discussion groups

around the future direction of the European project. In July EAPN Ireland hosted the online launch event with participants from all five partner countries. In November Maynooth University hosted the first Symposium of the project in the University which was attended by almost all the project partners and a number of external participants who discussed and debated a wide range of social and environmental issues and their relevance at EU level.



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 includes domestic anti-poverty and equality organisations, Trade Unions, international development NGOs and environmental organisations.

During 2021 the Coalition continued to engage with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and focused on the recovery from covid-19, hosting a conference in July entitled 'A Just Recovery from Covid-19: How the Sustainable Development Goals can Guide Ireland's Recovery'. 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. In 2021 ECOPPAM held its first General Assembly to adopt its statutes and first workplan.

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 2021.

Board Members during this period were:

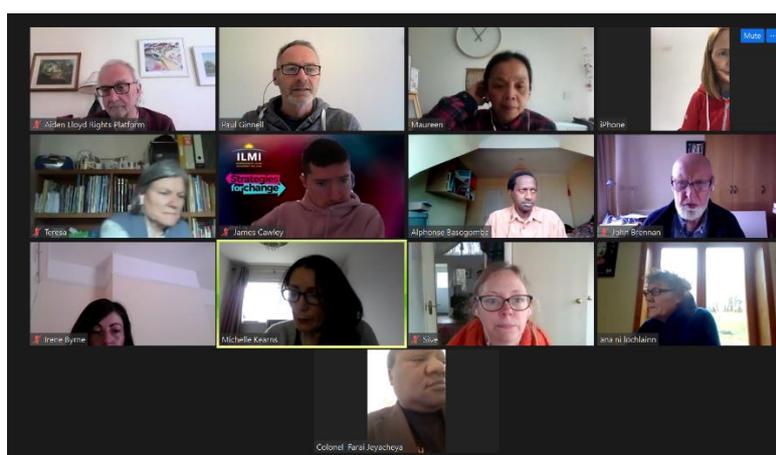
- Aiden Lloyd (The Rights Platform – Vice-Chair)
- Anne Loftus (Theatre for Change Galway)
- Farai Calvin Jeyacheya (Zimbabwe Heritage Trust)
- James Cawley (Independent Living Movement Ireland)
- John Brennan (Irish Association of Social Workers)
- Loraine Mulligan (SIPTU)
- Michelle Kearns (National Traveller MABS - Chairperson)
- Sive Bresnihan (Comhlámh, Treasurer)

Resigned in 2021

- Alphonse Basogomba (Intercultural and Diversity Education Centre – Ireland)
- Michael Mackey (Galway Simon Communities)
- Teresa Kearney (Longford Women’s Link)

Joined in 2021

- Kerrie Prendergast (Longford Women’s Link)



Thanks to Alphonse Basogomba, Teresa Kearney and Michael Mackey, who stepped down from the Board during 2021 for their much-appreciated contribution and commitment.

Staff

EAPN Ireland has three part-time staff:

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

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. A new Scheme has been advertised for 2022-2025 and EAPN Ireland will apply for this scheme which is critical to EAPN Ireland being able to operate and to draw in additional funding to run the organisation and organise activities.

During 2021 the network also accessed the following additional 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.

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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

