**Report on European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) activities 2015-1016**

IFSW-E joined EAPN as a European Organisational Member (EO) in 2012 as one of several measures adopted in response to the impact the financial crisis was having on those requiring social services and those delivering them. Fran McDonnell was appointed to represent IFSW-E in EAPN at the DM in September 2015. Ian Johnston formerly held this position but following his election to serve on EAPN’s Executive Committee for a 3-year term, it was necessary to appoint a replacement member to represent IFSW E’s interests as a European Organisational Member.

At the time Fran was nominated, there were many changes in EAPN. EAPN’s Director resigned and has been temporarily replaced by her predecessor, Fintan Farrell as Acting Director. The organisation has had a reduced budget from the EU and has been going through a process of reviewing structures, finances and plans. Many of the meetings and communications have been about the restructuring. A revised strategic plan has been agreed, which are very much in line with IFSW’s objectives. The 3 EAPN key strategic objectives are:

SO 1: More people with experience of poverty and social exclusion can actively promote fundamental human rights.

SO 2: EAPN influences EU and national policies to make progress on more effective solutions to fight poverty and social exclusion as well as to tackle its causes throughout Europe.

SO 3: EAPN is a member-driven organisation that has increased its recognition as a key civil society actor fighting poverty, social exclusion and inequalities.

Ian and Fran have commented on the proposals for a revised structure recognising the need to streamline some of the activities/committees whilst also ensuring that it remains a membership driven organisation. Cuts to funding have affected the budget for people to attend meetings including EO meetings. In the revised meeting plan there will be 3 EO meetings a year. As yet Fran has been unable to attend but BASW will now contribute towards expenses.

Fran is on the mailing list of European organisations representatives and receives all the relevant documents and information from EAPN. As appropriate she and Ian are responding to consultations and Fran is sending relevant information through to Cristina and Joana for information and circulation. These have included:

* Newsletters
* EAPN Position paper on TTIP (December 2015) – drawn to the attention of the IFSW group working on this issue and referred to in their briefing paper.
* Distribution of the easy-to-read version of the European Commission’s consultation on the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 for people with intellectual and physical disabilities. IFSW -E members were asked to send any responses to Fran to send on to EAPN but none were received.
* The EAPN assessment of the 2015 Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) and an Annex detailing country by country analysis ([here](http://www.eapn.eu/en/news-and-publications/publications/eapn-position-papers-and-reports/eapn-releases-its-full-assessment-of-the-european-commission-s-country-specific-recommendations-2015%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)). It outlined the impact they are likely to have on the Europe 2020 Strategy targets for poverty reduction, employment and education. EAPN suggested that members consider referring to the CSR’s when making representations to their own governments if this would be appropriate and the EAPN reports acts as a support for this.
* EAPN members contributed to a consultation on a “Written Declaration on Investing in Children”. EAPN spoke at the hearing and made proposals of amendments many of which have been taken on board. The final report [Report - Reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty - A8-0310/2015 - Committee on Employment and Social Affairs](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTUxMTExLjUxMzE1ODIxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDE1MTExMS41MTMxNTgyMSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE3NTAzMzAxJmVtYWlsaWQ9c2lhbi5qb25lc0BlYXBuLmV1JnVzZXJpZD1zaWFuLmpvbmVzQGVhcG4uZXUmZmw9JmV4dHJhPU11bHRpdmFyaWF0ZUlkPSYmJg==&&&100&&&http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A8-2015-0310&format=XML&language=EN" \t "_blank) was adopted on 11th October 2015.

The report calls for a large number of important recommendations including a Child Guarantee with a specific fund to ensure that every child has access to free healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and nutrition, as part of a European Integrated plan to combat child poverty, offering support to parents to come out of exclusion. It also recommends implementing or enhancing universal welfare benefits targeting children and away from the growing tendency to support policies towards more means-tested support, as evidence shows that universal support policies offer better protection against child poverty.

The report recognizes the role of civil society including children’s rights and anti-poverty organizations, in ensuring EU policy coherence and calls for strengthened civil dialogue. It also recommends putting in place mechanisms to promote children’s participation.

**Future activities**

* Continue with involvement in meetings, contributing to consultations and sending IFSW members appropriate information.
* Fran applied and was accepted to be a member of the EAPN's upcoming Task Force on Poverty and Human Rights reporting to the Steering Group of EAPN's EU Inclusions Strategies Group (EU ISG). There are 6 people on the Task Force and the work was proposed by EAPN Denmark who will be leading.
* Fran has a meeting arranged in May with Katherine Kelly who has written extensively and is very actively involved with EAPN's EU Inclusion Strategies Group (EUISG) which is concerned with commenting on the Country Specific Recommendations (CSR's). She will discuss how to develop EAPN country links.
* EAPN have submitted a tender to the European Commission DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion to develop a European Minimum Income Network (EMIN) A Journey for better minimum income schemes and a better Europe – Everyone on the Bus. The EMIN2 project is developed in a close partnership with key stakeholders engaged and committed to the advancement of the debate on adequate and accessible Minimum Income Schemes across the European Union. The partnership is led by the European Anti-Poverty Network and is composed of partners at both EU and national level.

Fran McDonnell 22nd April 2016