EAPN representative report April 2017 to 2018

1. **Your visibility, institutional voice and fields covered from April 2017 to April 2018.**

IFSW Europe is a member of The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN). This is the largest European network, active in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. EAPN is committed to the participation and empowerment of people experiencing poverty. At present, there are 31 national networks and 13 European Organisations. This year the fee was 200 Euros.

Fran McDonnell has been the IFSW Europe Organisational Representative since September 2015 when Ian Johnston was elected to serve on EAPN’s Executive Committee. Over the past year, Fran attended the EAPN General Assembly in Dublin on 20-22nd October and 3 Task Group workshops in Brussels. Ian attended the Annual Policy Conference and accompanying Executive Committee meeting on 15-16th June, the 16th European meeting of People Experiencing Poverty on 9–11th November in Brussels and a further meeting of the Executive Committee in Oviedo, Spain on 23-24th March this year. All the expenses for attending these meetings have been paid for by EAPN. Participation in these meetings and contributing to consultations, papers and guidance maintains the profile of IFSW Europe.

This year significant progress has been made with the ratification of The Pillar of Social Rights and now EAPN is very active in lobbying for effective implementation based on a transformative model of social protection and participation in the Annual Convention on Inclusive growth 2018.

The EAPN strategy priorities agreed at the GA are:

1. Analysing and signposting realities from the ground – starting from the lived experience of people experiencing poverty and antipoverty organisations and carrying out a ‘poverty watchdog’ function on what does and doesn’t work.
2. Engaging with EU frameworks to achieve poverty reduction (Europe 2020, European Pillar of Social Rights through the European Semester) – feeding in policy proposals, monitoring and supporting implementation, engaging in dialogue processes and advocacy actions.
3. Working in alliances to shape a rights-based, social and sustainable 2020 strategy based on a clear EU antipoverty strategy: developing concrete proposals and linking with Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.
4. Ensuring that EU funding benefits people in poverty.
5. **Actions in this period.**

a. Participating in the EAPN Task Force for Poverty and Human Rights

Fran has been one of the main contributors to writing an EAPN Handbook on Poverty and Human Rights. The final draft has been agreed and is being prepared for publication on the internet. There will also be a limited number of hard copies. It is called Change, Hope and Justice: A rights - based approach to Poverty. There is also an Annex of related Human rights legislation and organisations which should also be a useful resource. The final drafts have been sent to Ana Lima.

b. Participating in EAPN activities and policy development

At the GA, Fran did a presentation on the Handbook to the policy group and attended the Executive contributing to a discussion about the policy role of EOs in EAPN. We have given feedback on policy documents and consultations. These documents have also been forwarded to the IFSW working group on social protection where appropriate. Ian attended an EAPN seminar entitled “Building a European Social Standards Union” held in the European Parliament on 7th December 2017 and we are contributing to policy papers on:

* Financing of Social Protection
* The Future of Europe
* Migration Position Paper and Action Plan

Regular newsletters and information are forwarded to members via the IFSW Secretary as well as requests to lobby appropriate government Ministers and key officials on specific matters.

As a result of our involvement with EAPN, Ian and Fran were asked by Prof. Dr. Katrin Toens, *the Protestant University of Applied Science in Freiburg/Germany,* to contribute a chapter to a book on "How does the International Federation of Social Workers represent the interests of social workers in the EU?" We were also invited to be members of a panel speak at a social work student conference in January 2018 in Brussels “Mobilising social work against right wing populism.” The idea was to bring together perspectives from IFSW Europe, the European Parliament, Eurodiaconia and the European Network Against Racism (ENAR). Lilianne Cocozza, Belgium, kindly contributed on IFSW’s behalf as we were unable to attend.

c. Encouraging our members to work more closely with EAPN’s member organisations in their own countries to fight against poverty.

It was agreed at the last Delegates meeting to do a survey of the members at the meeting to get a snapshot of what the current levels of engagement with EAPN country networks are and consider whether we should actively promote this further.

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| A Summary of the information from the survey:   * 16 member organisations completed the questionnaire. * 11 members had contact with EAPN national networks and 5 are members. * 7 said contact with EAPN helped them to lobby for improvements and better services & 7 had contributed to the consultation on the Pillar of Social Rights and 7 had contributed to other consultations.   When asked about how to gather data and evidence to contribute more effectively to consultations:   * 10 said a database of member policy documents, press releases, statements etc which is regularly updated would be useful. This could be just the title, date and author in English. * 10 said to work with EASSW on how to access relevant research and policies and 9 said to use our membership of ENSACT to do this |

**3.List of key points that should appear on the Work Programme.**

Before deciding what should be in the work programme, the Social Platform Team (SPT), including myself as the EAPN representative, would recommend that there is discussion and resolution, at the Delegates meeting 2018, about whether IFSW Europe wishes to continue its membership of European organisations and if so how the work of the representatives is integrated and supported by the Executive. We feel this should be an important part of the future strategy debate.

Some of the discussion at the last Delegates meeting and the process by which the project group “Social workers for transformational and sustainable social protection in Europe 2017-2919” was set up, has left us with questions about whether the representative roles are valued. One of the reasons for Ian Johnston’s resignation from the position of IFSWE Representative to the Social Platform was that the SPT were not consulted or involved in the development of the special project, despite the work that the team had already carried out on the Pillar of Social Rights and our understanding that we would lead and certainly be directly involved in this important initiative.

The SPT, EAPN and FRA representatives consider that IFSW Europe should have a strategy to promote social work and social workers roles. In order to make the most of the limited resources and capacity of IFSW Europe, this should be done both through IFSW projects and through strategic partnerships with organisations at European and national levels that share our principles and values.

We believe that IFSW Europe’s involvement and representation on these important and influential European networks is one of the best way to raise our profile, to have an impact and ensure social work values are reflected in European policy. If anything, we would recommend widening these types of opportunities. The more representation we have on key groups, the more information and knowledge we can share with our members and the more influence we can have. For example, Ana Radulescu was able to be part of a Social Platform delegation at the Gothenburg meeting which proclaimed the Pillar of Social Rights.

We see several advantages, as it spreads the load if more IFSW Europe members can be involved on a voluntary basis. Whilst at the same time, it can increase our members knowledge and understanding of the European policy context and therefore our ability to influence and to become involved in lobbying. Usually the European organisations will pay for representatives to attend key meetings and sometimes workshops. This amounts to much more than the cost of annual membership.

We believe that for the partnership work to be most effective, the Executive Committee needs to have more ownership of the work that is done by the representatives. This could be achieved by a member of the Executive having a liaison role with responsibility for supporting them and attending SPT skype meetings.

The Executive should also consider cost effective ways of accessing information from members that would contribute to the work of IFSW projects and the IFSW representatives as suggested in the action plan.

If there is a commitment to continue with EAPN membership as part of the ongoing strategy, recommended actions would be to:

* Follow up on the survey to encourage further links with EAPN’s national member organisations. This could include doing a briefing to members which includes information about the survey, the work of national EAPN networks and links to country contact details.
* Work with the Executive on developing a database of member policies etc, which would support us to contribute more effectively to ongoing consultations and developing policy papers.
* Follow up on the possibility of working more closely with organisations such as IASSW and ENSACT to access relevant research about poverty.
* Contribute to EAPN capacity building, campaigning and lobbying activities at European and national levels, in particular the drive to secure minimum income for all citizens ( <https://emin-eu.net/about/> )
* Passing on useful information about EAPN’s policies, activities, and publications to our members.
* Circulate links and promote the Handbook Change, Hope and Justice: A rights - based approach to Poverty when available.

Fran McDonnell 08/04/2018