



**GLOBAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER**  
**December 2015**

*Season's Greetings and Happy New Year to our readers!*

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**Feature article. EAPN Ireland: facing new challenges, finding new solutions**

by Robin Hanan, Director European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) European and national levels

*In 2015, EAPN Ireland joined the ICSW. Welcoming a new member, we are looking for new experiences, new thematic agendas and capacity-development lessons that EAPN Ireland is bringing on board. Even a brief history of the organization told here represents an interesting story in its own right, hopefully paving way for new forms of collaboration and new partnerships within our network.*

*The Editor.*



Robin Hanan is Director of EAPN Ireland. He has previously worked as CEO of the Irish Refugee Council and Comhlámh (a development education and global justice NGO), a lecturer on 'Ireland in Europe' in University College Dublin and a civil servant. He has also been active as a volunteer in many social justice and equality organisations and has lived and worked in Italy, the UK, Sweden and Nicaragua.

Originally set up by anti-poverty NGOs to provide a voice in European policy and to network with counterparts across Europe, EAPN Ireland is the Irish national network of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN Europe), which works to put the eradication of poverty at the top of the EU and national agendas. The organization was established in 1990 as a network of groups and individuals working to reshape public opinion and to promote broad-scale anti-poverty efforts.

The founders felt that the EU membership was important to Ireland, but the scope of new issues and concerns stemming from that might be difficult for people at the grass-roots level to apply in practice, given that their main focus was in their local community. The other constraint was that most areas of social policy, apart from working conditions and industrial relations, fall under national rather than European Union competence, so decisions at Community level have no legislative force at national level. Despite those limitations, however, the EU is important to anti-poverty activists in three main ways:

First, most economic and employment policies in the EU affect social conditions. In general, the consolidation of the free market in goods and services and the deepening European fiscal union, without balancing social requirements, threatens to create a 'race to the bottom'. Investment will tend to flow from countries and areas with the best social and employment protections, and therefore highest tax rates, to countries with lower standards, unless this is checked. For example, EAPN has been active in debates on the Services Directives over many years, arguing that liberalization in trade in social services could have detrimental consequences for employees and service users, undermining their bargaining positions. The immediate impact of this has been brought home to people in Ireland through the direct involvement of the European Central Bank and the European Commission, alongside the International Monetary Fund, in co-managing macro-economic policy in Ireland from 2009 to 2012 under the debt bailout agreement. This continues to be important under the Fiscal Treaty whereby EU member states and institutions have a surveillance function over national budgets.

Second, particularly since 2000, the European Union's member states have increasingly cooperated in shaping social policy through the Open Method of Coordination. EAPN has been very active in promoting and monitoring a strong anti-poverty drive in the main economic and social policy frameworks, the Lisbon Agenda (2000-2010) and the European 2020 Strategy (2010-2020). EAPN Ireland has played an active role in monitoring the poverty commitments in both strategies, seeking a positive dynamic between domestic and international norms. We

do this mainly by analyzing plans, reports and Commission recommendations, by involving members in policy responses and campaigns and increasingly by coordinating with other NGOs and trade unions.

Third, the EEC/EU has been an important source of support for Irish anti-poverty activists, through funding, new ideas and opportunities to network. Soon after Ireland joined the EEC in 1973, the then Irish Minister for Social Welfare Frank Cluskey and the European Commissioner for Social Policy Patrick Hillary, who also happened to be Irish, promoted the development of what became the European Poverty Programmes. For over a decade those programmes funded local community-based initiatives aimed at practical solutions to fight poverty, seen at the time as pilot projects, of which the most successful would be mainstreamed, and funded learning exchanges and joint projects across Europe. Those programmes led to the growth of a very strong sector of bottom-up community development organizations, which were the mainstay of EAPN membership in Ireland and elsewhere in Europe. Unfortunately, this sector is now under serious threat. European funding has largely dried up, and national funding is moving some organisations away from representation and community development and towards service delivery and merging others into local government.

As a result, Ireland was initially set up with an exclusive focus on European policy and its impact on poverty in Ireland. In recent years, however, as Irish and EU policies have become more closely entwined, we focus almost as much on national policies, while retaining an expertise on the European Dimension.

### **Membership and Alliances**

EAPN Ireland membership is open to non-governmental organisations whose main aim is to fight against poverty. Associate membership is open to other organisations who want to support our aims and to individual supporters.

Currently, the network has about 250 members. Most are local community development organisations, but membership also includes most of the national anti-poverty organisations.

National organisations come from a range of different sectors. The national organisations representing Travellers, a mainly nomadic ethnic minority suffering severe discrimination and poverty, have been active in developing EAPN Ireland from the start. The Coordinator of the

Irish Traveller Movement, Fintan Farrell, was elected President of the Europe-wide EAPN for four years and was subsequently employed as Director of the Network, based in Brussels, for ten years. Other national organisations which have been particularly active include the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, two networks representing the interests of lone parents, several high-profile organisations working with homeless people, the Irish Association of Older People, migrant and refugee organisations and most recently the Disability Federation Ireland. These national organisations tend to be most active in EAPN Ireland's policy work, along with a broad range of allies such as the National Women's Council, the National Youth Council and the biggest Irish trade union, SIPTU.

Most of the members are locally based community development groups, representing or working with disadvantaged communities. Some are based in disadvantaged urban or rural areas, while others represent specific disadvantaged groups like lone parents, unemployed people or Travellers. Much of the policy consultation and training work of the Network takes place at local level. Typically, an event is organised by EAPN Ireland but hosted by a local member group in a town or city and is advertised widely, not just to members.

EAPN gives particular priority to the voice of people experiencing poverty and affected by policies, but our work also includes front line workers in anti-poverty organisations.

Thus EAPN Ireland, like counterparts across Europe, tries to be a meeting place between activists concerned about poverty from a range of different backgrounds in our local and national work.

EAPN Ireland also convenes a number of broader alliances. We act as secretariat to the Community Platform, which brings together most of the national organisations working against poverty and for equality, including the main groups representing women, victims of gender-based violence, LGBT and other communities, as well as anti-poverty groups. The Platform maintains liaison with a range of Government Departments (ministries), as well as promotes its own policy initiatives.

We also have a number of alliances set up to promote specific policies, usually as part of Europe-wide initiatives by EAPN. The Better Europe Alliance, initiated and convened by EAPN Ireland, brings together the main national social and environmental NGOs and trade unions to link to the European Semester (Europe 2020 and the Fiscal Pact). This group has an active liaison with the European Commission and with Government Departments and inputs to policy

processes and political debates. The Irish Minimum Income Network, also set up by EAPN Ireland, works to promote a more effective social protection at the national level to ensure adequate social protection 'floor'.

## **Activities**

EAPN Ireland empowers members to put the fight against poverty at the heart of the Irish and European agenda through training, information, research and advocacy.

Training sessions are run, usually at local and regional level but sometimes at national level. Most are run by EAPN Ireland but hosted by a local member. In a typical year, this would include at least 15 sessions involving at least 200 people. Most training sessions are linked to capacity-building, policy development and consultation. Thus a session might involve training in understanding a particular policy area, such as employment, the European Social Fund funds or anti-poverty strategies generally, followed by a policy discussion drawing directly from the experiences of participants. Some would also include an element of dialogue with decision makers, such as Members of the European Parliament. One stream of training work focusses on understanding EU and national decision-making structures and learning to influence them through advocacy and campaigning.

EAPN Ireland also provides a broad information service for members through a monthly e-newsletter, EAPN Ireland NewsFlash, and through briefings on a wide range of policy areas.

EAPN Ireland's advocacy work now focuses particularly on including and delivering anti-poverty targets in the Europe 2020 Strategy and its implementation in Ireland, although we also take up a wide range of issues as they arise. The focus on Europe 2020 involves monitoring and working to influence the European Platform Against Poverty and the delivery of policies and achievement of targets in Ireland. This in turn includes running a series of regional workshops, with the Community Workers Coop, to prepare grassroots activists to participate in the annual government-run Social Inclusion Forum. Much of the advocacy work involves research and policy submissions at Irish level and inputs to the same at the EU level, linked to lobbying of politicians and officials and public campaigning.

In recent years, EAPN Ireland has also worked to promote the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) in Ireland and the European Minimum Income Campaign. Previously, an EAPN Ireland campaign led to the Irish Presidency of the EU successfully promoting a 'cross-cutting clause' in what became the Lisbon Treaty to ensure that all EU

policies must take account of social inclusion. EAPN Ireland has also worked with members at local level to retain capacity and fight cutbacks to existing services, and with allies at national level through campaigns like the *Poor Can't Pay* and the *Equality and Rights Alliance*.

EAPN Ireland is also very active in the Europe-wide EAPN network, playing a central role in policy development and advocacy. We also participate in the annual European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty, where many Irish activists have learned from and made links with counterparts from across Europe.

EAPN Ireland became a member of International Council on Social Welfare this year, and we look forward to working with its members into the future. We are part of an alliance planning to bring the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development to Dublin in 2018 and we hope to meet a wide range of ICSW members there, to promote networking and establish mutually advantageous relationships.

***The opinions expressed in the article are those of the author and may not necessarily reflect the position of the ICSW Management Committee.***

➤ ***A landmark Paris accord on climate change: a comment***

**by Sergei Zelenev**

After two weeks of complicated and exhausting talks at the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris 195 nations agreed on 12 December to the largest climate deal ever, aimed at reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. In and of itself, the Paris Conference signified a positive outcome to long-term multilateral efforts to address the risks of climate change, bringing together many stakeholders, but most importantly, governments, international organizations, and civil society organizations. Given the relentless pace of global warming caused by carbon-dioxide emissions and its dire consequences, including melting ice caps, rising sea levels, unusual weather events -- be they record rainfalls or heavy storms, devastating heat waves and droughts -- and many other negative impacts on the environment, already present or highly probable in the immediate future, the outcome of the Conference goes far beyond its indisputable diplomatic significance. In fact, this collective effort embodies credible pledges by Parties to the Agreement to include nature in any environment-oriented future action,

including recognition of the role of tropical forests in curbing emissions. The recognized need to move forward with clean-energy technologies produced by the signatories serves as a guidance for all nations to embrace required modifications in their policies in attempt to limit the global temperature rise to a level well below 2 degrees Celsius, and to adapt to climate-change impacts already unfolding. However, the poverty dimension was also highlighted by the drafters of the text: in the words of the Agreement, it "...aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty ..."

There are both optimists and skeptics among the commentators in the wake of the Conference. A key feature of the Paris accord -- an enhanced attention to scientific evidence during essentially diplomatic discussions -- was highly praised. Such attention to the accumulated scientific evidence was an important breakthrough, and being an undercurrent during the discussions, was also taken into account when other dimensions, such as financial and administrative dimensions, of the Agreement were discussed. In this sense high-level political commitments to increase the joint ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and to foster climate resilience was clearly a reflection of the growing awareness and concerns of the international community regarding the plight of future generations, an attempt to broaden time horizons beyond the immediate preoccupations and policy priorities. Many influential policy makers around the world became open to the warnings made by leading scientists about irreparable damage to the Earth, our common home, in the absence of the required urgent action to reduce the risks of global warming.

The pledge of the developed-country Parties to provide financial resources to assist developing-country Parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation is combined with the core principle of collective responsibility embodied in the Agreement, meaning that all signatories have to do their share to achieve a common good, including the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases among the developing countries. The important issues of mutual trust and transparency were not overlooked either in that context. The Agreement requires regular and transparent reporting of the carbon reductions by every country within the framework of "nationally determined contributions". Building upon "enhanced transparency" and "build-in flexibility" the Agreement stipulates that "the purpose of the framework for transparency of action is to provide a clear understanding of climate change action" in the light of the objectives of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, "including clarity and tracking of progress towards achieving individual nationally determined contributions., adaptation

actions., including good practices, priorities, needs and gaps, to inform the global stocktaking..”

The skeptics among the commentators often point out the voluntary nature of the agreements and the lack of a mechanism for their enforcement. Some others are saying that the negotiations resulted in a deal that falls far short of staving off the worst effects of climate change, but at the same time gave all of us something the world surely needs—a sense of hope that tangible results could be achieved through a long over-due change in policies. In any case, the climate deal is seen by many as a correct road that leads to forward-looking policies to decarbonize the economy at a lowest cost.

The hardest part of the deal - delivery of the results - begins now, and the stakes are very high. The behavior of national governments will be the ultimate testament of their commitment to the agreed goals. Much would depend on their ability to create proper incentives for businesses, particularly those operating in energy and heavy-industry sectors, using various tools such as taxes, special allowances or credits aimed at cutting emissions, facilitating green investment and promoting clean-energy technologies. Some of those measures have been already tried but the results are mixed and much more needs to be done. In many countries, coal still remains a predominant fuel used for electricity generation, exacerbating the pollution levels. Globally, renewable energy sources still account for about 10 per cent of total energy supply, with most of that coming from hydroelectric power. But after the Paris agreements, carbon impacts and harmful emissions can no longer be ignored when the private sector prepares business plans. At the same time, the realities of today’s global energy markets are not particularly favorable to pollution-reducing efforts: the declining price of crude oil and natural gas, in the absence of international agreement on a carbon tax or other similar arrangements, actually facilitates the use of fossil fuels at a time when the environmental costs of burning such fuels are raising.

While the negative consequences of climate change do not respect national boundaries, making inhabitants of both developed and developing countries suffer, for people living in poor countries the costs of environmental degradation are often much higher, and climate-resilient development is more difficult to achieve. When poverty is rampant, forcing people to survive from one day to another, then the lofty goals of “green growth” and sustainable development pale in comparison with the immediate needs of those people. It is widely admitted that the efforts aimed at poverty eradication are closely linked with mitigation and

adaptation policies. In this sense, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement should be seen as mutually complimentary and reinforcing global programs.

For more details on the Paris Agreement:

<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09.pdf>

➤ ***New President of ICSW elected.***



In December 2015, in accordance with its Constitution and the by-laws that determine the electoral cycle the International Council on Social Welfare organized elections of a new President to succeed the incumbent President Michael Cichon, whose term of office expires next year. The President is the highest-ranking official in the organization, responsible for strategic thinking and policy direction. According to the results of the vote, Eva Holmberg-Herrström of Sweden was elected President with 73 per cent of the vote, while the contender, Miloslav Hettes of Slovakia, got 27 percent of the vote.

The President-elect is well known to the ICSW network: since the year 2000 she has occupied various positions nationally and internationally. In 2007, Ms. Holmberg-Herrström was elected President of ICSW-Sweden, and the year after was elected Regional President of ICSW-Europe, staying in that position for the subsequent four years. Since 2012 and up to the present, she has been serving as a member of the ICSW Management Committee. She will also represent ICSW in the Global Steering Committee for the upcoming 2016 Joint World Conference in Seoul, as she did previously in the context of the 2014 Joint World Conference in Melbourne.

Ms. Holmberg-Herrström was instrumental in organizing the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development in Stockholm in 2012, serving as a focal point and Coordinator of the Conference. Apart from that, she was closely involved in the organization of two world thematic conferences on children in institutions co-sponsored by the Stockholm University and UNICEF and convened in 1999 and 2003.

Eva is well familiar with the NGO world—for several years she worked for Swedish office of “Save the Children”, as a chair of the local chapter in Trelleborg and member of the national board of the organization.

Her professional carrier has been strongly linked to education; she taught social work at Stockholm and Gävle Universities. A lawyer by education, she also worked as a Student Councilor and international project manager.

We wish Eva Holmberg-Herrström every success in her new position as the President of ICSW.

➤ ***Useful resources and links - the find of the month.***

**1- Big Data and International Development: Impacts, Scenarios and Policy Options**

Spratt, S. and Baker, J.  
IDS Evidence Report 163  
Publisher IDS, University of Sussex, UK

Big data, we are told, will be the fuel that drives the next industrial revolution, radically reshaping economic structures, employment patterns and reaching into every aspect of economic and social life.

Those changes are already having major effects and will continue to do so. Beyond that, little is clear, however. In the world of data, size obviously matters. But how much will it matter in the end, in what ways will those effects be felt and by whom. Perhaps most importantly, what can be done to influence this? While considering the potential impacts of big data in a broad sense, this paper applies these questions specifically to developing countries.

For more details: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/big-data-and-international-development-impacts-scenarios-and-policy-options>

**2- Multiple Forms of Migrant Precarity— Beyond “Management” of Migration to an Integrated Rights-Based Approach, UNRISD Policy Brief, December 2015**

In recent months, the media have been flooded with stories of migrants and refugees fleeing under great personal risk and hardship from war, conflict and poverty. The initial wave of solidarity and empathy by European citizens has quickly given way to policy approaches and a public attitude of crisis management and unfruitful attempts at burden sharing. The magnitude of what has been termed the "migrant crisis", its urgency and potential long-term implications require, more than ever, an informed debate and careful analysis of the potential implications of current policy responses.

For more details:

<http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/search/FEF99BD256157F28C1257F1600516AC5?OpenDocument>

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