

ANNUAL REVIEW 2020

The Social Services
Network for Europe



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and Social Innovation 'EaSI' 2014-2020

ABOUT THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL NETWORK (ESN)

The European Social Network (ESN) is the independent network for local public social services in Europe. It brings together the organisations that plan, deliver, finance, manage, research, and regulate local public social services, including health, social welfare, employment, education and housing. We support the development of effective social policy and social care practice through the exchange of knowledge and expertise.



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Letter from the Chair

Dear ESN members and colleagues,

2020 has been an intense year, with many difficulties and practices unknown to us. It was also a year of hard work and determination, led by an immense spirit to assist our members and provide social services across Europe.

It is with great pleasure that I look back on our work within ESN for a social Europe, through an active exchange of innovative social solutions, bringing people together, and a shared commitment to vital social services. Together we have travelled many kilometres and it remains essential that we continue to support each other. We have spent many hours on face to face as well as video meetings. We have exchanged hundreds of emails, organised dozens of calls where we listened to each other, worried and cared for each other, but foremost we have been living in the hope to get 'back to normal' soon.

What matters today is that we can be proud of what we have achieved as ESN, together with you all guided by unity, conviction, and love for what we do together. And this is what I would like to thank you for and pay my most profound respect.

However, we see that Europe is under pressure. Brexit and other strong political divisions threaten to undermine the foundations of a strong Europe. The erosion of democratic values such as freedom and discrimination against citizens on any basis is not acceptable. I conclude hoping to meet you face to face at the 28th European Social Services Conference in Hamburg. The conference theme: 'Rethink, Inspire, Dare – Community Care' is now more topical than ever. Stay safe!

Yours sincerely,



Christian Fillet
Chair



Letter from the CEO

Dear members and friends,

With this publication, the European Social Network (ESN) assesses its activities in 2020, a year marked by the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on our lives, our work and social services in general.

For social services professionals on the frontline, Covid-19 has brought about incredible disruption. At ESN we have documented the challenges that social services working with children and families, youth, people with disabilities, the homeless and older people have been facing throughout the year as well as how heroically they jumped into action, to care for those in need.

But Covid-19 also brought about several transformative changes we have spoken about for years. Quoting Rahm Emanuel “never want a serious crisis to go to waste”, it became necessary to implement digital, agile and remote ways of working; the crisis was the impetus to fast-forward into them.

Thanks to the support of the European

Commission and partners, ESN created and adapted extensive opportunities for mutual learning. We shifted to remote working to protect employees and 100 percent online knowledge exchange and knowledge building activities to serve members facing mobility restrictions almost overnight.

We mobilised global expertise instantly, organised meetings ranging from 30 to 300 people almost immediately and responded to members inquiries more rapidly by providing everything digitally, from activities preparation to follow-up. This meant a significant investment to ensure that our digital channels were up to speed to pivot to our first full virtual programme of workshops, working group meetings, annual seminar, and the European Social Services Awards ceremony.

We are aware of the heavy toll that Covid-19 has had on social services and social care. Initial data from members indicate that as the number of requests for social services support increase, so does the cost for social services. Strong public social services not only act as an effective safety net to protect

the most vulnerable, but they are also vital for economic recovery through the promotion of an inclusive society. Speaking at the European Social Services Awards, European Commissioner Nicholas Schmit emphasised “the strategic role of social services in the future recovery of Europe through the recovery and resilience facility and the next funds programming period.”

ESN closes 2020 looking forward to the preparations of the 28th edition of the European Social Services Conference in Hamburg, where we hope to see you all to discuss the transformation of care in the community, which is now more relevant than ever. In preparation of our future strategy, we will also bring our members together in the Members Forum, an opportunity not only to share our achievements, but also to shape our future.

Let the journey begin!

With best wishes,



Alfonso Lara Montero
Chief Executive Officer



2020

IN NUMBERS



ESN spoke at

20

Events



60,542

Website Users

ESN organised

17

Events



92

Participants at Annual Seminar



3,146

Publication Downloads



336,600

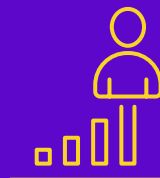
Tweet Impressions

150

Members in

35

Countries

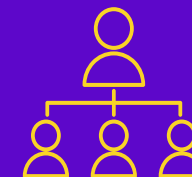


17,296

News Subscribers

1,249

Participants in
EaSI co-founded
activities



European Social Services Awards

80

Submitted Projects

80

Attendees at
Awards Ceremony

24,557

Online Votes for
Shortlisted Projects

2020 ACTIVITIES

19 February, Roundtable discussion at European Parliament, Brussels

The future FEAD: Exploring innovative tools to support Europe’s most deprived



1 April Supporting the Frontline

24 April Challenges and Future Planning

22 May Protecting Children in Times of Crisis

16 June Lessons Learnt and Planning Forward

9 July Long-Term Care Challenges and Responses

14 October Make it Digital

30 October Social Vouchers for Targeted Support

2-3 April Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

8-9 September Integrated Care and Support

22-23 September Reference Group on The European Semester

13 October | 26 October | 15 December EU Funds and Social Services

7 December Digitalisation of Social Services



12-13 November Annual Seminar: Delivering Quality in Ageing and Care

4 December European Social Services Awards Ceremony

SHARE

Current Policy & Practice



COVID-19 IMPACT ON SOCIAL SERVICES

Local public social services

Promoting their voice in Europe

Despite the adversity of dealing with the pandemic, public social services have been at the forefront in serving and protecting the most vulnerable. We have worked tirelessly to promote the work and perspective of public social services underlining their essential role and highlighting the support they need at the highest levels in the EU.

Recognising the work of public social services

From the start of the crisis, ESN has been among the very first European organisations to raise awareness towards the European institutions on the impact of the pandemic on public social services. During this time, ESN has been unequivocal on the central role of public social services in protecting

the most vulnerable in our societies and key to social recovery post Covid-19. Through our Covid-19 Webinar Series, ESN created the ideal platform for direct exchange between our members and the European Commission to convey these messages. ESN conducted seven such webinars with the participation of 800 delegates who tuned in to contribute and learn from our members' practices.



Throughout 2020 a significant number of our activities focused on the impact of Covid-19 on social services. Thanks to the valuable input of our members and partners,

ESN launched:

- A **dedicated webpage** that gathered resources and best practice on how social services across Europe responded to the emergency created by Covid-19;
- A **series of webinars** on relevant themes such as ensuring continuity of care, child support, impact on long-term care or crisis preparedness;
- A **publication** for social services practitioners on challenges, needs and impact on social services crisis planning.

COVID-19 WEBINAR SERIES

1. Supporting the Frontline

Ensuring continuity of care in response to the Covid-19 crisis was the theme of the first webinar with social services leaders from Italy, Denmark, the UK, Spain and the US. This webinar aimed to understand how the crisis impacted social services, what had their responses been so far, and the measures they had put in place to support frontline workers.

“We are deploying volunteers and council staff into ensuring that food and medication reach those who need them the most. In a small city like Swindon, we delivered 150 food parcels last week and over 120 calls per day”

Sue Wald, Corporate Director
Adult Social Services, Housing and
Health, Swindon (UK)

Find out more [here](#).

2. Challenges and Future Planning

This webinar aimed to understand the challenges and emerging needs to which social services had to respond in light of Covid-19. Social services directors in public authorities from Belgium, Spain and Sweden described newly created programmes and how they had to review their current and future planning to adapt frontline social services to the public health emergency. It was also an opportunity to discuss European tools and funding with Katarina Ivanković Knežević, Director at DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

Graham Owen, Association
of Directors of Social Services
(Sweden)

Find out more [here](#).



“To respond to future crises, we need to rethink how we develop our future plans”

3. Protecting Children in Times of Crisis

The aim of this webinar that brought together child protection directors and academics from the UK, France and Italy, and MEP Dragoş Pîslaru, was to discuss lessons learnt from the health emergency to inform child protection planning and how to support these plans through available national and European instruments. MEP Dragoş Pîslaru, highlighted the importance of investing in children's services, including child protection, through the implementation of a Child Guarantee across Europe.

United Nations Dialogue on Poverty

The UN rapporteur on poverty invited ESN to contribute to the UN dialogue on the inter-generational transmission of poverty, where we highlighted the need for investment in public social services to target the most vulnerable children to respond to the social crisis created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

“ Robert Schumann, Europe's founding father, highlighted the need for solidarity in Europe. Now we need to show solidarity to support our future generation by investing in children ”

MEP Dragoş Pîslaru

Find out more [here](#).

ESN Response to the

Child Guarantee Consultation



Child Guarantee

ESN welcomed the commitment and progress towards the development of a European Child Guarantee. In its response to the European Commission's consultation, ESN consulted with members who highlighted two success factors. First, to prioritise care for children in situations of vulnerability through National Child Care Plans. Second, consultation and inclusion of regional and local authorities with responsibility for child protection, and children themselves.



4. Lessons Learnt and Planning Forward

This webinar brought together social service regulators and workforce organisations from the UK, Ireland and the US to discuss future preparedness and continuity planning to respond effectively to public health emergencies.

“Future responses to the pandemic will need to take into account the views and needs of the different population groups supported by social care, and the social care managers dramatically affected by the pandemic”

Jim Thomas, Programme Head
Workforce Innovation, Skills for
Care and Development (UK)

Find out more [here](#).



Covid-19 impact on social services:

Lessons learnt and planning forward

This publication takes stock of social services responses to the Covid-19 crisis to use lessons learnt for future crises preparedness planning.

Covid-19 impact on social services:
Lessons learnt and planning forward

5. Long-Term Care Challenges and Responses

Covid-19 disproportionately affected older people, particularly those living in residential care. At this webinar, speakers from Austria, Germany, Hungary and Scotland in the UK underlined challenges faced and discussed the changes that they need in older people's services to better prepare for similar crises.

“

Establishing care at home as the new normal for the future and excellent residential care for older people with special needs

”

Peter Macleod, CEO,
Care Inspectorate, Scotland, UK

Find out more [here](#).

6. Make it Digital

At this webinar, we learnt that new tools like virtual reality (VR) or artificial intelligence (AI), can be very valuable to improve public social services, but also that they should be adopted when they can genuinely make systems more efficient for staff and end users. A key element in digitisation is to focus on the end results.

“

With data from interventions with people supported by social services, we have created a model that supports professionals to make decisions

”

Lluís Torrens Mèlich, Social Social
Innovation Director
Barcelona City Council, Spain

Find out more [here](#).



7. Social Vouchers for Targeted Support

The Covid-19 crisis has put an even larger spotlight on public social services seeking innovative tools to meet a growing demand for social support. At this webinar, we learnt from experiences in Germany, France and Italy as to how social vouchers have contributed to facilitate the provision of support for vulnerable populations.

“

As we face the Covid-19 crisis, we are searching to empower the most vulnerable people in our societies and vouchers is one tool that we can use in social services to do that

”

Christian Fillet, Chair, European
Social Network and Deputy
General Director of the city of
Bruges (Belgium)

Find out more [here](#).



BUILD

Knowledge to Promote
Quality Services



Integrated Care and Support Working Group

The 3rd Integrated Care and Support Working Group Meeting on **8 and 9 September** examined strategies to provide **integrated support** for **adults with mental health issues**. The meeting welcomed over 100 participants, with insightful keynote addresses of representatives from the public and private sectors, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the World Health Organisation. We also engaged in mutual learning and exchange of local practice from Denmark, Italy and Latvia and national strategies from Malta and Finland.

Working Together for Better Outcomes

Discussions focused on:

- the cross-sectoral nature of mental health and the need of coordination between different services for the integrated provision of care, highlighting how public services can work together to support mental health and wellbeing;
- improving accessibility, effectiveness, and high-quality mental health care through community-based services.

Challenges and Elements for Success

Speakers highlighted the need to address gaps in finance, fragmentation in service

coordination and delivery and, importantly, the issue of stigma.

The most common thread to success across the practices was a coordinated approach bringing together a range of services such as joint needs assessments and personalised programmes involving the person(s) using the

services. Adequate resourcing, prioritisation, and political will were also identified as key in the implementation of integrated strategies.

Find out more [here](#).

“

Coordination between different sectors is key for the provision of integrated services to support adults with mental health issues

”

Ronan Mangan, Policy and Development Coordinator, European Social Network

“

We need to invest in broad, long-term and cross-cutting collaboration between different sectors to improve integrated care in the community for people with mental health issues

”

Sarita Friman, Ministerial adviser, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Finland)

Social Services Digitalisation Working Group

Let's Go Digital!

On **7 December**, we organised the second meeting of ESN's working group on **Digitalisation of Social Services**.

Representatives from social services discussed how data and analytics as well as technological solutions can contribute to social services' practice improvement, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, and learnt from practice in Spain, Sweden, Latvia, Malta and the United Kingdom.

Key findings

- Near time data and technological solutions for data management and transfer are crucial for decision-making;
- The collection of individual and aggregated sets of data is crucial for collective decision-making;
- Data can help with forecasting future demand and establishing profiles of people using services;
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, public social services authorities mostly invested in warehousing and predictive analytics tools, especially for future demand forecasting and risk profiling.

Find out more [here](#).

“

During the Covid-19 pandemic, public social services have mostly invested in predictive analytics, assistive living technology and data warehousing

”

Martin Duggan, Advisor to the Government of Canada



“

The collection of individual, near-time data can lead to collective decision-making and ultimately to saving lives

”

Begoña Lopez Gonzalez, Head of the Social Services Observatory, Regional Ministry of Social Rights and Welfare, Asturias (Spain)

EU Funds and Social Services Working Group

As the European Commission and national authorities began to set the priorities for the next EU funding programming period, ESN has been very active in the need to include social inclusion priorities. ESN has adopted a dual approach to ensure the inclusion of social priorities in EU programmes. On the one hand, ESN has worked to raise awareness on the importance of the social services sector to the recovery of Europe post Covid-19. Most importantly, we have supported our members within their national context through the development of a specific Working Group.

A strong and well-financed public social services sector is essential for mitigating the social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and Europe's recovery. Therefore, in 2020, ESN created a working group to promote the inclusion of social priorities in EU funding instruments and discuss how public social services at local, regional and national levels can access EU funding programmes.

Working group members met Loris Di Pietrantonio, Head of the ESF/FEAD Unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. In parallel, national members met with EC officials with responsibility for funding in their countries to highlight challenges regarding social services access to EU funding.

“

The available EU funds will need to be invested in social inclusion to mitigate the social effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and also to continue tackling the problems that already existed before the pandemic

”

Ángel García Frontelo, Deputy Director General of the Administrative Unit of the European Social Fund, Ministry of Employment and Social Economy, Spain

“

Innovation in social inclusion programmes will be crucial for accessing EU funding

”

Alfonso Lara Montero, Chief Executive Officer, European Social Network

Themes for further work:

- Ensuring information on EU funding mechanisms cascades down to managers in regional and local social services;
- Bottom-up approach in priority-setting and inclusion in discussions on the distribution of European resources based on population needs;
- Recognition of public social services as essential services and inclusion of social inclusion objectives in EU funding instruments.

Ensuring Quality in Ageing and Care

On **12 and 13 November**, ESN held its first virtual annual seminar on **how public social services can best contract Long-Term Care (LTC) services and guarantee high-quality support for older people with complex needs.** The event was co-hosted by ESN member, the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and supported by SAP. The virtual high-level discussions, workshops, networking and an exclusive members' session provided participants with opportunities to discuss an extensive range of aspects related to contracting and quality of LTC.

Quality in Ageing and Care
Online Seminar | 12-13 November 2020

Shifting the Paradigm

An essential aspect of the seminar discussions was the shift from quantifiable care quality standards to qualitative standards for people's quality of life.

“ We see a paradigm shift from quality of care to quality of life, this means placing the person in the centre ”

Joseba Zalakain, Director of the SIIS Research Centre (Spain)

“ Care must be based on the strengths of people. Care providers must allow them to stay at home for as long as possible ”

Guido Cuyvers, expert by experience (Belgium)

By having the person as the focus of care, another paradigm shift seems inevitable - from institutional to home and community care.

ESN's CEO Alfonso Lara Montero concluded that a 'double shift' is needed to guarantee access to affordable quality long-term care. A shift from quality of care to quality of life, with the person in the centre of the chain care, as well as a shift from institutional to community and home care. Public planners, procurers, regulators, and funders should embrace this shift to make our long-term care systems fit for the challenges ahead.

Inspiring Innovation

We learned about promising practices for quality assurance:

- **Outcome-based Commissioning** is used

in Swindon (UK) to allow for quality improvements when procuring long-term care services through a lead provider. Among other positive impacts, admissions to nursing homes have been reduced by 10%;

- **Social clauses** are used in LTC procurement procedures in the city of Aviles (Spain), to allow for the improvement of working conditions of care workers, a prerequisite to attract more workforce to an understaffed sector;
- A method of **Collaborative Social Planning** has been developed in the county of Siegen (Germany), to improve care quality and to allow people to stay in their homes for longer.



“ We should always highlight the importance of principle 18 of the European Pillar of Social Rights that underlines that long-term care should be accessible and affordable, but also that it should be provided at home and in the community. ”

Katarina Ivanković Knežević,
Director for Social Affairs, DG
EMPL, European Commission.



Watch our video - ESN Seminar: Delivering Quality in Ageing and Care

INFORM

International and National
Policy-Making



REFERENCE GROUP ON THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER



This report captures the perspectives of our members, local public social services, on the implementation of EU social policy priorities.

To bring closer the work of our members and the European Commission's proposal for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), 2020 thematic focus was on the implementation of three key principles concerning child social welfare, long-term care and addressing homelessness.

Social Services Priorities in the European Semester

On **22 and 23 September**, ESN held its annual meeting of the European Semester Reference Group to analyse key trends and priorities, captured in our report Investing in Social Services, Investing in Europe.

In 2020 the Group focused on three key European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) principles in 17 countries:

- Principle 11 - Childcare and support for children;
- Principle 18 - Long-Term Care;
- Principle 19 - Housing and addressing homelessness.

Key Issues:

- absence of initiatives to strengthen community and family-based care (Principle 11);
- fragmentation in health and social care services in community settings (Principle 18);
- persistent issues in housing supply and support (Principle 19).

Members highlighted recommendations to address these issues, such as:

- foster care;
- strengthening community and home support for older people;
- integrated housing and social services.

Towards a People's Europe

Response to European Commission Consultation
Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights



ESN proposes the Commission the creation of an integrated social strategy post-2020 linked to the Pillar implementation which should be monitored through the European Semester and a broader scoreboard with indicators disaggregated by age, gender and disability.

A cross-cutting element across the 2020 principles of the EPSR is the provision of support to vulnerable populations, hence we request the EC to implement the Pillar through a **Care Guarantee** for All linked to initiatives such as the Child Guarantee, Youth Guarantee, disability, employment and long-term care European actions.

Requests to the European Commission:

- **Promote Investment** in Social Services to support Europe's recovery and resilience;
- Support national authorities to set up a **Care Guarantee** for All;
- **Support the workforce** to improve quality of social services and social care.



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is supported by the European Union Programme for
Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI") 2014-2020.

THE FUTURE IS LOCAL AND SOCIAL!

Cities social services role in the implementation of SDG11

Representatives from social services in several European cities met to discuss their role in the development and implementation of local inclusion and sustainability strategies to advance **SDG 11- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.**

The discussion took place in the form of a webinar on 2 and 3 April in cooperation with ESN member, the Department of Social Protection of the City of Zagreb, and the support of the Croatian Presidency of the European Union. Participants addressed cities social planning and strategies to improve housing and fight homelessness.

Delegates learnt about best practices from Tel Aviv, Zagreb, Barcelona, Riga, and cities in the Gothenburg region. They also discussed challenges and recommendations in the development and implementation of city strategies advancing SDG11.

Central role of social services in local inclusion strategies

Cities social services are central in the development and implementation of local inclusion and sustainability strategies advancing SDG11, as they plan, finance, manage, deliver services and work directly with the vulnerable populations that the SDGs intend to serve.

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The future is local - and social!
SDG 11: Cities' social services' role in local inclusion and sustainability strategies



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Cities social strategies should be:

- Inclusive of all relevant stakeholders in the community;
- Coordinated between different levels of government, sectors and agencies;
- Carefully drafted, evidence-based, long-term and built on continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure their sustainability.

This policy briefing discusses the role of cities' social services in the development and implementation of local inclusion and sustainability strategies advancing SDG11. It includes challenges and recommendations in cities social planning and housing and homelessness, as well as several practice examples from cities' social services advancing the Sustainable Development Agenda across Europe.

The Future FEAD

Exploring innovative tools to support Europe's most deprived

Under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), food and material support funded by the European Fund for the most deprived (FEAD) will not only be provided through the distribution of goods, but also through electronic vouchers or cards.

To discuss how this legislative change could lead to improvement in implementation, we organised a roundtable on 19 February at the European Parliament. The event was hosted by MEPs David Casa and Brando Benifei and attended by more than 40 representatives of European institutions, local authorities, food and goods distributors and providers of voucher solutions like Edenred.

ESN members from Croatia, Malta and Greece discussed their experience with FEAD's current

implementation and presented their voucher programmes currently in use. Participants agreed that e-vouchers and e-cards could indeed improve FEAD implementation for public authorities and beneficiaries.

E-vouchers can...

- help beneficiaries to make their own choices to purchase fresh food and prevent them from queuing at distribution points;
- reduce public expenditure for food storage and distribution and free up resources for other social support measures;
- be combined with accompanying social inclusion measures such as health and employment programmes.

“E-cards allow beneficiaries to make purchases in close proximity to their homes, remove stigmatisation and provide dignity as people can make their own choices.”

MEP David Casa

The Future FEAD:
Exploring Innovative Tools
to Support Europe's most Deprived



This publication is based on the roundtable discussion on new implementing tools for the European Fund for the most deprived (FEAD), which was organised in the European Parliament on 19 February 2020. It discusses current FEAD implementation and showcases practice examples from public social services, who are already using e-vouchers and cards in social support programmes.

Promoting Integrated Community Care beyond Europe

We have made efforts to work with international organisations and partners promoting the integrated delivery of care in the community not just in Europe but also across the pond.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

ESN's CEO contributed to the WHO Integrated People-Centred Health Services blog with an [article](#) on the integrated delivery of health and social care in times of crisis.

Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)

The IADB organised a forum on the continuity of care at home and telecare services for older people, where ESN's CEO Alfonso Montero had the honour to speak alongside Juan Luis Bermudez, Minister of Human Development and Social Inclusion in Costa Rica, and Daniel

Radío, National Secretary of Care in Uruguay. After the event, Alfonso wrote a blog for the IADB with examples from different European countries.

More info about the [event](#) and the [blog](#) article.

Stewards of Change

ESN contributes to the US think tank Stewards of Change, which focuses on addressing the social determinants of health. Both organisations aim to build knowledge on approaches to improve coordination and interoperability across sectors.

The Economist's Digital Imperative

ESN's CEO was invited to speak at the Economist's event '[The digital Imperative](#)', where he shared views with colleagues from the US on the impact that Covid-19 brought to public social services and social care across Europe and the need for digitalisation to respond to the integrated provision of community care.

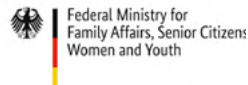


NETWORK

With Key Decision-Makers
Across Europe



28th European Social Services Conference



Rethink, Inspire, Dare Community Care

The **28th edition of the European Social Services Conference (ESSC)** will be hosted by the City of Hamburg and supported by Germany's Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

At the 28th European Social Services Conference, we are inviting public authorities, professionals, care providers, businesses and community organisations to join

a discussion on re-imagining how we help people who need support to lead better lives within their communities.

Join us to discuss four pillars of community care:

Workforce: Social service professionals are key in transforming community care. How should social services approach training, retention, and wellbeing?

Financing: It is possible to get value for money when investing in community care. Do we need to rethink the financing of community care?

Ethics: What is the role of professional ethics in quality care? What does empowerment in care mean for professionals and people using services?

Technology: New forms of IT have the potential to improve care, from planning through delivery to evaluation. How can technology help in rethinking community care?

Innovation Zone

At the conference in Hamburg, we are opening an Innovation Zone for our partners.



Are you changing social services through the provision of IT and digital products and solutions for public authorities?



Have you created tools for needs assessment, care planning, safeguarding or supporting mobile professionals?



Are you working with public authorities in the design and implementation of new tools, services and platforms for social services management?

Get in touch with ESN's CEO alfonso.montero@esn-eu.org for more information.

European Social Services Awards

Transforming Community Care

The European Social Services Awards recognise innovation and excellence in social services across Europe and promote best practice in the sector.

Held under the theme 'Transforming community care', the 2020 edition honoured efforts to come up with innovative models of care in the community

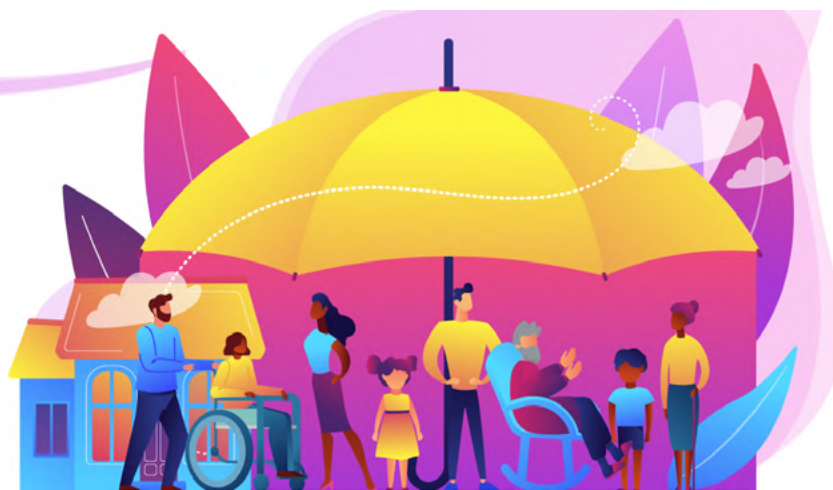
for all population groups: children and youth, families, adults with dependency needs, informal and formal carers.

Entries were submitted in five categories and shortlisted by a panel of experts while the winners were selected thanks to the judges vote and online voting by the public. The Excellence Award was voted by all the participants of the Awards Ceremony, held online on 4 December 2020.



Transforming Community Care

4 December 2020



European
Social Services
Awards



© European Commission 2020

“The many projects shortlisted contribute directly to the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, helping to improve living conditions, health and inclusion of individuals and families from all ages and backgrounds”

Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

Excellence Award

Simon Community Scotland, UK

Street outreach teams and volunteers from Simon Community Scotland delivered first rapid responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and almost eliminated rough sleeping in Scotland's two major cities. Within 72 hours, the teams secured more than 600 homeless people a safe and professionally supported place to stay before the national lockdown was announced.

Excellence Award Winner

Ending rough sleeping during lockdown



“Our teams take a uniquely personal and compassionate approach working in partnership with many other agencies to ensure people access income, housing and healthcare”

Lorraine McGrath, Simon Community Scotland, UK



Social Innovation Award

The project 'Fablabteka' involves an experimental social laboratory that uses digital tools such as 3D printing or laser cutting to provide workshops for young people with high school drop-out rates and unemployment, promoting their social and labour market integration.



Collaborative Practice Award

The project Housing Solidarity Network is a social housing rental project to support families in need led by Foundation Cepaim in collaboration with the bank Cajamurcia, community social services and several third-sector organisations. The project is implemented in 21 municipalities across the two Spanish regions of Murcia and Valencia.



Outstanding Team Award

The Workforce Development Team within Northern Ireland Social Care Council developed digital learning resources to support the social care workforce during Covid-19 lockdown and to enable them to respond safely, quickly, and effectively by providing practical accessible information within the first weeks of the pandemic.



Research Project Award

The project 'Rethinking social services -the social services laboratories' promotes the development of public social care policies by a participatory approach through labs implemented with a range of stakeholders in the community and documented through the University of Valencia, Spain.



Technology Tool Award

Hoplr is an app, a digital neighbourhood network and a knowledge centre for inclusion and citizen participation, based in Belgium and the Netherlands. It boosts citizen engagement to promote community building through a social network and tools for local authorities. It was used during the Covid-19 lockdown to connect local neighbourhoods and steer community care.



An Expanding Network

Join Our Community of Members

Access Good Practice and information about European Policies

- E-Practice Library
- Monthly Newsletter
- Members Communications
- Online community of members
- Meetings with EU policy makers
- Consultations contributing to EU policies
- Policy-making

Participate at Events and Networking

- Covered participation at ESN events for one delegate
- Discounted participation at events for a 2nd delegate
- Discounted fee for the ESSC annual conference
- Discounted fee for the ESSA ceremony
- Discounted fee for ESN trainings
- Extra delegates at events for CORE+ members

Membership Types



CORE

Public authorities and associations of social services directors in Europe.



CORE +

Core members with additional funded places at events.



COUNCIL

Core members who help guide ESN policy direction, eligible to become Board members.



ASSOCIATE

Other service providers, professional associations, inspection and development bodies, and applied research organisations.



GLOBAL

Public authorities, associations of professionals and social services directors, quality inspection and applied research organisations from across the world who share our mission and values.

For more information on how to join, contact us at membership@esn-eu.org

Our Members



Meet our Members

EXELLO, Belgium

Luc Kupers, Vice Chair of EXELLO and Deputy General Manager of the City of Gent.

“Our financial support system can be considered a good practice in social work in Belgium, maybe even Europe.”

Meet Luc Kupers, Vice-Chair of EXELLO and Deputy General Manager of Ghent, his hometown in Belgium. Before taking on this role 2.5 years ago, Luc had been responsible for social services for almost 10 years. In his current role as a deputy manager, amongst his many duties Luc has overarching responsibility for networking and international cooperation.

Luc has worked with ESN since 2002 and currently acts as the vice-chair of Belgian member,

EXELLO, an organisation that gathers general managers of cities and municipalities in Flanders to network and cooperate in support to local communities. “Since social services are key at local level, ESN membership was the logical choice for EXELLO”, explains Luc.

As the general manager, Luc is proud that social inclusion is one of the main topics guiding local policy of Gent. He tells us about a well-implemented support system of the federal state that provides additional financial aid for people in need. This has shown to be an effective support in getting people out of extreme poverty. The importance of this practice is mainly shown through the high concrete outcome in closing the poverty gap.



“Throughout my journey with ESN that started in 2002, I have participated in every **European Social Services Conference** and been a member of the ESN Council since 2005. I have contributed, observed, listened to excellent stories of practices from across Europe, and I invite fellow colleagues in social services to do the same.”

Dignity and respect are the core values promoted in this specific practice. Everyone has the right to a decent living, and this can be ensured by providing people in vulnerable positions with financial support to afford food, housing costs, education, and the means to raise their children.

We asked Luc how ESN has supported him and his organisation in learning from others, this was his answer:

Huoltaja Foundation, Finland

Lea Suoninen-Erhiö, Managing Director, Huoltaja Foundation, Finland

“*Creating a positive narrative around social services is key to contribute to their development*”

Meet Lea Suoninen-Erhiö, Managing Director at the Huoltaja Foundation, an independent expert organisation that brings together professionals, researchers and developers working in the field of social welfare and social care services. Lea works together with her colleagues to strengthen social services, vocational competence, and knowledge through the organisation of meetings and seminars on different thematic issues.

In her role as Managing Director, she mainly focuses on communication as she has over 20 years experience of working as a journalist specialised in the social sector. Lea is strongly committed to promoting a positive narrative around social services. In her opinion, we should take every chance to communicate our work to highlight the role and meaning of social services.

We asked how Huoltaja Foundation came up with the idea of building a positive narrative around social services.

The Huoltaja Foundation organised an essay competition for professionals in the field of social services with the aim to collect different experiences and highlight the challenges faced by people in vulnerable situations and social services professionals during Covid-19. The essays

described how the pandemic affected the lives of people using services and professionals on the ground and how they promoted social inclusion under such difficult circumstances.

Lea explained how through the organisation of this competition, they were able to show the importance of respecting human

dignity and social justice when working with people in vulnerable situations. The essays emphasised that these values are not abstract principles, but foundational values we all must commit to.

We asked Lea how ESN has supported her and the Huoltaja Foundation in learning from others, and this is what she answered:

“*My participation in ESN has opened the possibility to learn about how social services are organised in other national contexts. These opportunities have opened new windows and ways to understand social wellbeing and inclusion.*”

Regional Government of Catalonia, Spain

Meritxell Benedí, General Director of Social Services

“Strategic Plans for Social Services should promote social inclusion and social services quality.”

Meet Meritxell Benedí, General Director of Social Services in the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Families of the Regional Government of Catalonia, Spain. Meritxell tells us how the Government of Catalonia is currently in the process of adopting a new Strategic Plan for Social Services for 2021-2024 that will function as the roadmap for Catalan Social Services. We asked Meritxell what the mission of the Strategy is and how they have worked in its development.

Meritxell explained that the mission of the Strategy is to ensure that all citizens have the same chances to shape their lives supported by the care and support they need and the promotion of their personal autonomy. We have worked together with colleagues to develop a plan that reflects the commitment of the government to ensure that social policies are implemented with the aim to improve social services efficiency and coverage in Catalonia. Quality, innovation, diversity and user-centred are examples of guiding principles that will shape the strategy.

We asked Meritxell how ESN has supported her and the Ministry in learning from others, and this is what she answered:

“ESN offers many opportunities to network with other key decision-makers in social services. Through the annual **European Social Services Conference**, thematic working groups and peer-learning visits, ESN has created a platform where we can learn about how to promote quality in social services from across Europe.”

**Association of Directors of
Adult Social Services (ADASS)
in England, UK**

Sue Wald, Corporate Director of Adult Social Services, Housing and Health at Swindon Borough Council and Co-Chair of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) in England, UK

“Recognising the specific skills and expertise of individuals in need of social care is core to our work.”

Meet Sue Wald, ESN Board Member. Sue represents the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), who are the voice of social care in England. In addition to her role as the international lead within ADASS, Sue brings valuable contributions to ESN through her experience of working with social services within the South West Region in England.

To show the meaningful work to

promote social inclusion in her region, Sue tells us about how they have been promoting an approach to social work called ‘Strength-based Working and Community Led Support’. This approach focuses on having an initial conversation with a person in need of support, rather than immediately focus on a formal assessment.

The outcome of their work is that the support offered to people recognises the specific skills and expertise of the individual and meets their needs. Sue highlights that they focus on the individual, what they want to achieve and improve in their life. The core is brave leadership, respect, trust, and the creation of a safe place where there is space to ask for help, listen and share what one thinks without judgement.



“Thanks to ESN, we have been able to share our efforts with this approach during this year’s Annual Seminar on Delivering Quality in Ageing and Care, and the meeting of the Reference Group of the European Semester. By sharing our experience through ESN activities, we can make a difference by illustrating our learnings from this approach to other ESN members.”

We asked Sue how ESN has supported her colleagues within ADASS in learning from others, and this was her answer:

2020 Partnerships



European Parliament



Roundtable discussion at European Parliament on the Future FEAD



Lessons Learnt and Planning Forward

IBM Watson Health

Make it Digital



Social Vouchers for Targeted Support



Annual Seminar Delivering Quality in Ageing and Care

IBM Watson Health



European Social Services Awards



Join our Community of Partners

ESN has been partnering with the European Commission for many years to implement our annual policy programme.

Drawing on ESN's expertise as the Leading Social Services Network for Europe, we are also looking to engage partners in strategic cooperation for two key flagship activities:

The European Social Services Conference (ESSC)
(page 52)

The European Social Services Awards (ESSA)
(page 54)

RuralCare

The RuralCare project is led by ESN Member, the Regional Public Administration for Social Services in Castilla y León (Spain). ESN is one of the consortium partners with responsibility for practice identification and analysis, knowledge transfer and the project's communication and dissemination.

The project aims to tackle the challenge of providing quality, accessible, affordable and integrated long-term care in rural areas. With this in mind, RuralCare aims to offer an innovative social and health model that facilitates people's permanence in their own home, providing the care they need and respecting people's rights.

The approach is done from a holistic point of view, assessing not only individual needs but also the person's physical, social and family environments. The pilot project will be carried out in the Spanish region of Castilla y León and ESN will ensure that the outcomes are then disseminated in other rural areas in Europe for the improvement of the future long-term care model.



Plena inclusión



Este proyecto (Ref. VS/2020/0290) ha recibido financiación del programa de la Unión Europea Empleo e Innovación Social ("EaSI") 2014-2020

Governance

Management

The Board of Trustees



The Board of Trustees are legally responsible for the governance of ESN. They are responsible for overseeing the management, financing and work of the Network and its members' interest.

The Board nominates the Chair, the Vice Chair, the Honorary Treasurer and the Legal and Policy Secretary. They may also allocate other responsibilities as needed.

The Trustees meet at least four times a year; for instance, in 2020 they met 5 times, and are in regular communication throughout the year.

Current Trustees are:



Christian Fillet, Chair, Deputy Director at the city of Bruges, Belgium



Carlos Santos Guerrero, Vice-Chair, Deputy Director General of Social Services and Economic Management, Regional Government of Galicia, Spain



Rannveig Einarsdóttir, Honorary Treasurer, Chair of the Association of Directors of Social Services, Iceland



Sue Wald, Legal and Policy, Co-Chair of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), England, UK



Graham Owen, Board Member, Association of Directors of Social Services, Sweden



Alfred Grixti, CEO of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Malta



Helena Bezjak Burjak, Chair of the Association of Centres for Social Work, Slovenia



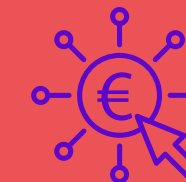
Harri Jokiranta, Deputy Manager, city of Seinäjoki, Finland

The Council



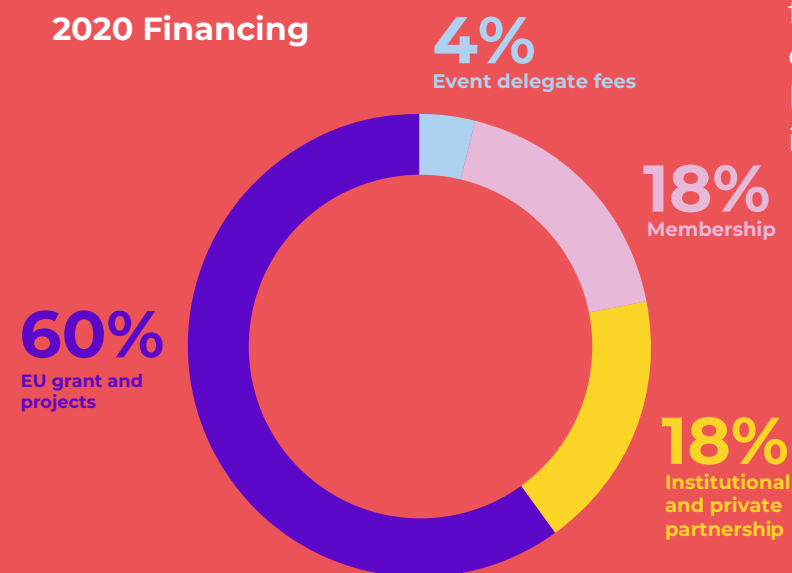
The Council consists of 24 national and regional organisations that bring together directors of social services and associations with expertise in the sector. They are 'voting' members who, among other functions, elect the Board of Trustees. The Council is responsible for ESN's overall strategic direction and the approval of the annual accounts. The Council meets at least twice a year; for instance, in 2020 they met in June and December.

Financing



ESN's financing comes mainly from four sources. In 2017, ESN signed a framework partnership agreement with the European Commission (EC) for 2018-2021 under the EaSI programme for employment and social innovation and applies annually for a grant to implement the activities co-funded by the EC. Since 2020, ESN is also part of the EaSI RuralCare project. In addition, ESN organises the European Social Services Conference and the European Social Services Awards in cooperation with institutional and private partners. However, in 2020 ESN saw its income from delegate fees reduced due to the cancellation of events. Finally, ESN is an ever-growing Network of members who contribute to its sustainability.

2020 Financing



THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat, which is led by the CEO, provides strategic, policy, communications, financial and administrative support to the Network of Members. It also manages the Network's relationships with partners, including the European Commission, national governments, and private partners.

Meet the Secretariat



Alfonso Lara-Montero
Chief Executive Officer



Cosmina Gantner
Communications
Manager



Thomas Stevens
Junior
Communications
Officer



Laura Mangeng
Policy and
Communications
Officer



Ronan Mangan
Policy and Development
Coordinator



Alessandra Perna
Policy and Executive
Support Officer



Rebeca Madruga
Project Manager



Tanja Sheikhi
Membership and
Operations Officer



Jeanette Fava
Finance and HR
Manager



Martin Lichte
Policy Officer



Magdalena Kolczynska
Policy Assistant

European Social Network ASBL

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