



Leading  
Social Services

# ANNUAL REVIEW 2023

The Social Services  
Network for Europe



Co-funded by the European Union



# The European Social Network (ESN)

The European Social Network (ESN) represents the voice of public social services as employers, managers, funders, planners, providers and inspectors of social services in Europe. ESN inspires Social Services Leaders to Improve the Lives of People in the Community through the development and exchange of knowledge to improve policy and practice in public social services, including all support and community-based services fighting poverty, promoting social inclusion and autonomy, child protection, protection of people with disabilities, care and support for older people, homeless people, and people and families in disadvantaged socio-economic situations.

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# Letter from the Chair

## Dear ESN Members, partners and colleagues

For social services across Europe, 2023 has continued to be a year of crisis. The social consequences of the continuing war in Ukraine; rising inequality; the war in Gaza and demographic changes which are not only increasing demand but creating shortages in the social services workforce continue to create challenges for social services professionals and their teams.

However, these challenges have only acted as a spur to the European Social Network team. Not only did the number of ESN members grow, but all the projects and events organised during 2023 saw an unexpectedly higher turnout and interest. There is a realisation we can only find solutions if we work together, and I would like to thank the ESN Board and Secretariat for their excellent work and continuing support in making such opportunities for exchange possible.

In this annual overview you will find a selection of our activities in 2023 and also some key figures that also provide more insight into our current operations and challenges.

Looking ahead, as Belgium assumes the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first six months of of 2024, we will continue to highlight the developments in employment and social affairs policies which are needed to support social services. We will continue to tailor ESN's operations to the needs of our members to support those who are vulnerable and in need of support in our communities. My sincere thanks to everyone for your efforts. I am proud and excited to continue this fascinating but much needed journey with you in the months and years ahead.

**Yours sincerely**

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'C. Fillet', with a large, stylized flourish underneath.

**Christian Fillet**

**Chair, European Social Network**

# Letter from the CEO

**Dear friends,**

As we embark on a new year, it is with great pleasure and pride that I reflect on the achievements and the importance of our commitment to social services. In this ever-evolving landscape, our dedication to making a positive impact on society remains steadfast.

Over the past year, we have seen an increase in attendance, members and programmes and have achieved significant milestones in our social services initiatives. These accomplishments would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication and hard work of our entire team. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the key achievements that demonstrate our commitment to creating a better world.

The 31st edition of the European Social Services Conference organised with Sweden's EU Presidency was the largest to date with almost 700 participants from 40 countries from Europe, America, Asia and The Middle East. For the first time, we organised an event exclusively focused on technology to promote autonomy and social inclusion.

The ceremony of the 5th edition of the European Social Services Awards represented the first ESN large event hosted in a country in the Balkans. More than 150 delegates from 23 countries attended the ceremony, testament to our commitment to supporting social services development across all regions in Europe.



More than 160 delegates from across Europe gathered at our autumn seminar in Barcelona in cooperation with Spain's EU Presidency. In the framework of EU efforts on de-institutionalising care, the seminar addressed how social services can lead the way in the development of care in the community.

Our partnerships with government and industry partners have flourished. These collaborations have enabled us to support causes close to our hearts, such as the promotion of autonomy, social inclusion, or person-centred community care.

We continue to engage with local communities through various programmes. We actively supported community care development projects, social services quality reviews, participated in the setting up of standards in services, and led a child protection project. These efforts contribute not only to improve the lives of those in need but have also strengthen our bonds with local communities across Europe.

It is crucial to emphasise the importance of our social services endeavours. These efforts reflect our core values and contribute to the overall wellbeing of society. Our commitment to social inclusion is a moral imperative that shapes our identity as an organisation which cares and makes a meaningful difference in the world.

Looking forward to the 32nd edition of the European Social Services Conference in Antwerp that will focus on co-creating the social services of the future, let us continue to innovate, collaborate, and inspire positive change. Together, we can create a brighter future for our communities and the world at large.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to each and every one of you for your exceptional dedication and contributions to our social services initiatives. Your passion and commitment inspire me every day. Here's to another year of making a difference!

**See you in Antwerp!**



**Alfonso Lara Montero,**

**Chief Executive Officer,  
European Social Network**

## 2023 IN NUMBERS

**175** Members in **34** Countries

ESN organised **19** Events

ESN spoke at **35** Events

**37,900** Website Users

**417** Participants at EC Co-Funded Work Programme

**183,694** Twitter Impressions

**2,102** Publication Downloads

**21,000** News Subscribers

# European Social Services Awards



**35,000** Votes Cast

**44** Shortlisted Projects

**119** Submitted Projects from **32** Countries

# European Social Services Conference

**24** Speakers

**132** Presenters

**681** Delegates from

**40** Countries

**39** Sessions

# 2023 ACTIVITIES



**14 March**

**Future of the Welfare State – Recommendations from Social Services** (Online)



**24 May**

**Promoting Innovation in Employment to Support Social Inclusion** (Online)



**28 June**

**Enhancing Child Welfare: Designing Human-centred Technology to Improve Decision Making and Social Worker Retention** (Online)



January



**20-21 April**

**Working Group on Transformation and Resilience** (Warsaw, Poland)



**14-16 June**

**European Social Services Conference** (Malmö, Sweden)



**3-4 July**

**Working Group on Quality in Social Services** (Utrecht, Netherlands)



## 6 September

**Round Table: New Ways of Delivering Food and Material Support for Social Inclusion** (European Parliament, Brussels)



## 25 October

**Addressing Complex and Multiple Disadvantages: The Architecture of Effective Delivery Approaches** (Online)



## 7 November

**Round Table: Building a resilient social services workforce** (European Parliament, Brussels)



## 22 November

**The Power of Prevention** (Online)



## 9 – 10 October

**Annual Seminar: Social Services Leading Care in the Community** (Barcelona, Spain)



## 6-7 November

**Launch of Social Services Index** (Brussels, Belgium)



## 16-17 November

**2023 European Social Services Awards** (Zagreb, Croatia)

December

The European Social Network

# at a Glance



## Working Groups

- Social Services Resilience and Transformation
- Quality in Social Services
- Social Services Index

## Annual Seminar

**European Parliament Round Table  
with public social services**

**European Social Services  
Conference**

**European Social Services Awards**

## Social Innovation European Projects

- **Side-by-Side:** Supporting social services organisations to develop integrated mechanisms to prevent violence against children.
- **Social Services Helpdesk on EU Funds (SESK):** Creating the building blocks for a Social Services Helpdesk to provide support for social services in accessing and using EU funds at national level.
- **ACE:** Accelerating innovations in home care to address growing support needs for older people.
- **SISWEC:** Contributing to the improvement of professional social work training to help future social workers prepare for crisis situations.
- **RuralCare:** Developing an integrated home-based model of care in rural areas.
- **Reticulate:** Piloting an integrated system of social inclusion support through a 'one-stop shop' model for people furthest from the labour market.
- **xETIU:** Testing a new model of employment and social services coordination to transform minimum income to a new model of social inclusion support.
- **LINK:** Developing and testing a new transferable 'Learning & Innovation Lab' model to deliver more integrated and person-centred health and social care services to vulnerable populations.
- **Eldicare 2.0:** Supporting professionals providing care for older people through the development of a long-term skills strategy to address gaps and anticipate future needs of the long-term care workforce.

## Technical Assistance

We provide technical assistance to help social services leaders improve the lives of the people with whom they work, e.g. by providing training and workshops to build knowledge and capacity, improve the quality of their services, help develop standards or needs assessment, and scale up policy and practice.

Our technical assistance providers come from a variety of backgrounds, countries, agencies, and expertise in social services to help those on the ground in the best possible way.

In 2023, we provided technical assistance for:

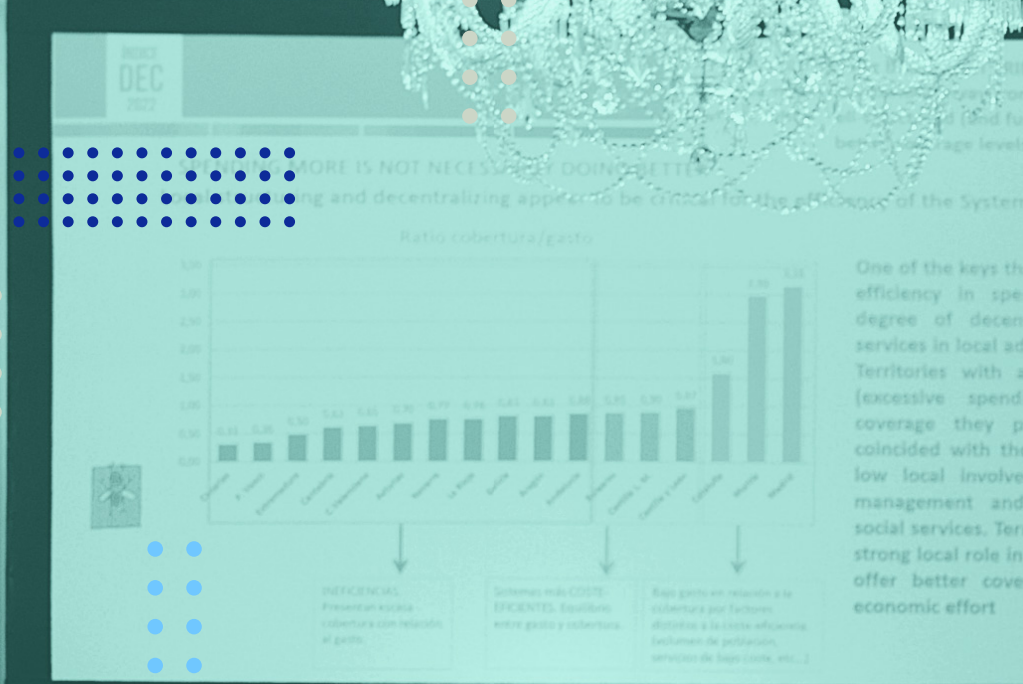
- **The Foundation for Social Welfare Services in Malta** to conduct a review of their social services in the next three years. The first review assessed their gender-based violence services.
- **The European Commission's Directorate General for Enlargement** to provide training on social services development and quality standards in Albania.
- **Janusz Korczak University in Poland** to support them with the development of their community care programme for social services managers.
- **Matia Foundation in Spain** to carry out benchmarking, a feasibility study and working group to assess the possibility of scaling up a new model of care to other policies and regions.

**SHARE**

**Current Policy and  
Practice**









# Social Services Leading Care in the Community

Barcelona, Spain, 9 - 10 October 2023

Community care is defined as “any form of support and care provided in the local community enabling people to overcome or manage any condition, disability, or life difficulties they may face. It empowers people in care to participate in society and to take control of their own lives.

To further strengthen social services' crucial role in providing community care, ESN organised its annual seminar on this theme, with the support of ESN members, the Spanish Ministry of Social Rights and the Department of Social Rights of the Regional Government of Catalonia, on 9-10 October in Barcelona, Spain.

During the seminar, we discussed ways in which governments across Europe are progressing their transition from deinstitutionalisation to a **model of care** that is **person-centred, home** and **community-based**. Participants shared compelling and diverse examples from different countries already successfully putting community-based care for children and youth, people with disabilities, and older adults into practice. Taking a holistic and collaborative approach that involves the different agencies involved in a person's care is key.

The perceived costs of transitioning to **community care** was identified as a major challenge, as institutional care is still seen as more economically viable. During the seminar we discussed with international researchers and social services managers how those economic concerns can be addressed, presenting the latest evidence from the London School of Economics and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development which highlighted how long-term care in the community is not inherently more costly.

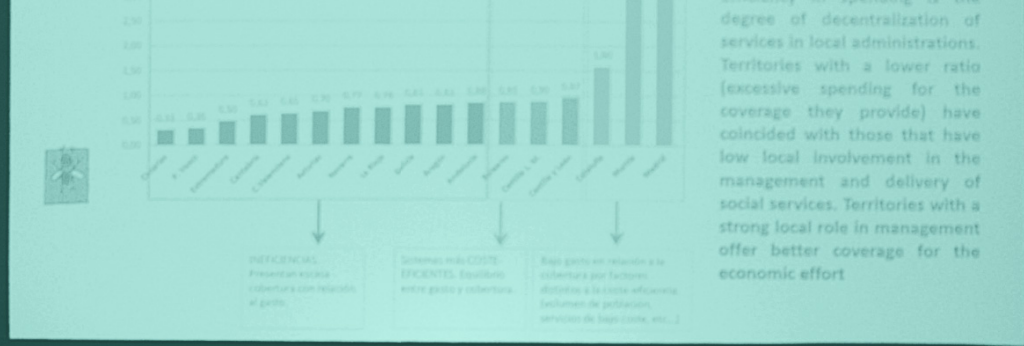
There is a compelling argument for prioritising **community care**, as seen through the lens of people with experience of care and many social services professionals providing community-based social services across Europe and ESN will continue to provide evidence-based expertise and guidance to facilitate the transition.

In partnership with:



Generalitat de Catalunya  
**Departament de Drets Socials**





*The seminar provided me with a chance to discuss with other European colleagues the common issues we face when it comes to long-term community care and how to prevent institutionalisation. Examples from Spain, Poland and Austria widened my view of how common problems can be tackled in different ways using our resources."*

Alex Gobey,  
Dementia Care Directorate, Malta



*The seminar enabled me to understand key issues around community care from an international and practitioner point of view. As an academic, it was great to attend an event that was practitioner-focused."*

Kelly Hall,  
University of Birmingham, United Kingdom

## Peer learning visits

Since 2014, ESN has been running the Peer Learning Visits Programme so the visitor organisation can learn about a programme ran by another member with the aim to implement it back home.

Four visits took place in 2023:

- The cities of Ghent and Genk visited the Association of Directors of Social Services (Divosa) in the Netherlands to improve their policies on social risk assessment and debt mediation.
- The city of Vilnius visited Fyli in Greece to improve their knowledge of Roma social inclusion programmes.
- The Swedish eHealth Agency visited the Regional Government of Catalonia in Spain to gather information on how to develop a national strategy and policy for integrated care through a specific agency.
- Azerbaijan's Public Employment Agency visited Aarhus, Denmark, to learn about their social participation and employment programme for people with disabilities.



◆ ***Health and social welfare have no national boundaries. The ESN programme of international Peer Learning Visits forms the bridge between thinking globally and acting locally. ”***

Åsa Zetterström Klintsjö,  
Programme Officer, eHealth Agency, Sweden



◆ ***Recognise the issue, learn and apply. The Peer Learning Visits are an ideal programme for studying the extensive experiences of other countries in similar programmes.”***

Nijat Gochiyev, Head of Research and Strategic Development, International Partnership and Strategic Development Department, Public Employment Agency, Azerbaijan

# Podcasts

ESN's new podcast series gives a voice to the social services professionals on the frontline. How are they managing the challenges from rising inequality, an ageing population or shocks such as the war in Ukraine or the cost-of-living crisis? How are social services attracting people into the profession or promoting innovations to ensure access to quality social services? These are just some of the issues discussed during ESN's 2023 podcast series.

[www.esn-eu.org/podcasts](http://www.esn-eu.org/podcasts)

## Ukraine, one year on – the impact on social services:

Gabriela Schmutzer, Director General of Social Services, Bucharest, Romania

Thomasz Pactwa, Director of Welfare and Social Projects Departments, Warsaw, Poland

Reflections and personal experiences of local social services programmes to support people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

## Is technology the key to improving social services?

Ana Millán Huerta, Head of Digital Transformation at the Social Services Institute, Barcelona City Council, Spain

Sir Geoff Mulgan, Professor of Collective Intelligence, Public Policy and Social Innovation, University College London, United Kingdom

The transformation of social services through digitalisation.

## How do we invest in and manage the social services workforce?

Karin Schweinegger, Director of Human Resources, Consortium of Retirement Homes in Vienna, Austria

Ana Radulescu, Director, Social Assistance Training and Evaluation Centre, Romania

How organisations can develop their resilience to build the workforce's capacities to respond to crises.

## How do we ensure quality in social services?

Joseba Zalakain, Director of SIIIS Research and Documentation Centre, Spain

David James, Head of Adult Social Care Policy at the Care Quality Commission in England, United Kingdom

What does quality mean and where public authorities should focus their efforts to ensure quality in social services at local, regional, and national level.



**BUILD**

**Knowledge to Develop  
Quality Services**





## Working Group on Social Services Transformation and Resilience



### Warsaw, Poland, 20 - 21 April

In Europe, a rising demand for care, support and protection services is being driven, among others, by changing demographics, growing inequality, and the social consequences of unforeseen events such as the Covid-19 crisis and the invasion of Ukraine.

The meeting of the Transformation and Resilience Working Group, hosted by our member the City of Warsaw, brought together directors from social services across Europe to discuss how their organisations can develop their resilience capacities to ensure a continuity of quality services for an increasing number of people with support needs. In particular, they looked at implementing preventative approaches and early interventions, the role of data, and how to develop and manage a workforce that faces increasing workloads.

Measures to reduce demand require a societal shift to integrate a social perspective in all forms of public planning. For social services themselves, strengthening the capacity of organisations to adapt and anticipate problems as well as transform systems to be more resilient is key to ensuring that those supported by social services have an enhanced quality of life from their care and support.

As a result of this meeting, ESN proposed a **Demand Management Framework** - a roadmap for effective planning and allocation of resources to improve the resilience of social service organisations and the care and support provided to their communities.



*Social issues are becoming increasingly complex. They are often connected in one or multiple ways. The number of people who seek our help is increasing. Their problems cover subjects such as debt, housing issues, questions concerning the upbringing of their children and mental health."*

Iris Leene, City of Apeldoorn, the Netherlands





*Leaders and champions in social services can play a vital role as high-trust individuals whose creative mindset and determination can incentivise change by bringing focus to the importance of the transformation and showcasing success.”*

Declan McAllister, Director, Northern Ireland Social Care Council, United Kingdom



## Working Group on Quality in Social Services

Utrecht, The Netherlands  
3-4 July 2023

The 2010 Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services was a step forward towards a common understanding on social services quality within the EU. Since then, however, the understanding of quality, the way social services are delivered, and the mechanisms of quality assurance have significantly evolved. The meeting of the Quality in Social Services Working Group hosted by ESN members, Divosa and SAM who represent Social Services Directors and professionals working in the public social domain, brought together representatives from social services and inspectorates to make recommendations on how the European framework can be revamped to take into account current social services trends and developments.

Social services directors, professionals, and researchers from 16 European countries, representing local, regional, and national public social services, quality inspection agencies, research organisations and professionals' associations discussed the key principles for quality relevant for social services. They put forward **six principles for quality in social services**, building a basis for an actionable and effective quality framework that will guide the future formulation of the framework standards, which will be co-created with our members in 2024.

ESN will also seek the views of persons using social services, so we can publish a framework consisting of principles, standards and indicators that becomes a reference for quality social services in Europe.

## Principles of Quality in Social Services



*The European Commission now has an opportunity to revamp the 2010 social services framework to ensure any potential frameworks in the future are well aligned with the most up-to-date social services quality standards."*

Alfonso Lara Montero,  
CEO, European Social Network



*The working group helped me to concretise both what my agency does well and what could be improved, and start an internal discussion to give priority to quality in social services. For example, how we can support informal caregivers locally, but also what we can do to help local services assess by themselves the support they provide.”*

Erik Wessmann,  
National Board of Health and Social Welfare,  
Sweden



*In Austria, there is a pressing need for the formal recognition and regulation of social work. Currently, the absence of standardised conditions allows anyone to claim the title of a social worker, as there is no common curriculum in place.”*

Julia Pollak, National Association of Social Workers  
(OBDS), Austria

# INFORM

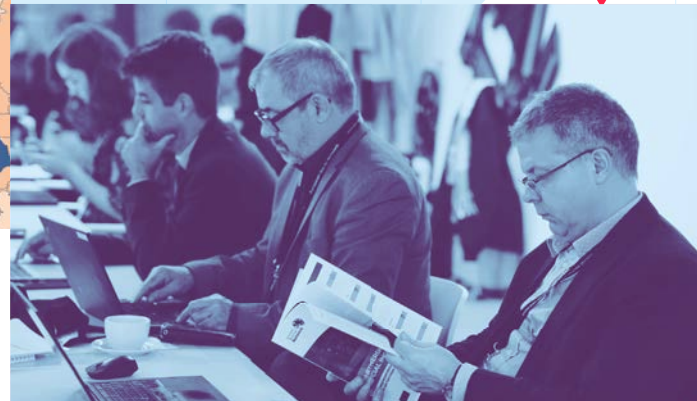
International and  
National Policy-Making





# Social Services Index

Brussels, Belgium, 6 November



In 2023, ESN evolved the way it addresses social services within the context of the cycle of economic and social policy coordination between the European Commission and national governments, known as the European Semester, with the launch of the Social Services Index. This new initiative aims to illustrate the situation of social services across Europe by focusing on three key areas of social services policy and practice: **social rights legislation and policy**, **social services economic investment**, and **social services coverage**.

The first index focuses on 10 countries from different parts of the EU, and will inform the European Commission about the challenges social services face, which policy makers can use when they develop their national reports. As the information gathered is improved, it is hoped it will lead to better understanding of the situation of social services across the EU – for example, is the rising number of children in child protection services the result of improved awareness and better identification or inadequate preventive measures?

Common issues identified across countries covered included:

- data collection challenges,
- funding gaps affecting coverage and quality,
- disparities in service quality,
- the absence of comprehensive overarching plans to address homelessness,
- lack of policy coordination across agencies.

Therefore, we also developed recommendations for each of the 10 countries tailored to their specific circumstances.



*This work is a source of inspiration but also of transformation of practice for decision-makers with responsibility for social services. It is an opportunity for an update on the evolution (reforms, economic or social challenges) in national social services.”*

Arnaud Lopez,  
National Association of Directors of Social Care and  
Health in County Councils (ANDASS), France



*The innovative approach of ESN through the development of the Social Services Index is important to assess and respond to social risks related to employment, the needs of people with disabilities, services for children, long-term care services and solving situations after economic crises.”*

Snjezana Frankovic, Ministry of Labour, Pension  
System, Family and Social Policy, Croatia



## Building a resilient social services workforce

Round Table - European Parliament, Brussels

7 November 2023



Developing, retaining, and attracting the right people into social services are key success factors for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its related initiatives like the European Care Strategy or the European Child Guarantee. The growing demand for social services across Europe because of rising inequality, an ageing population and shocks such as Covid-19 or the war in Ukraine are placing increasing pressures on our **social services workforce**. How we can support social services organisations to address these challenges was the theme of a round table at the European Parliament in Brussels on 7 November, hosted by MEP Max Orville, member of the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

ESN was joined by representatives from the European Commission, national governments, and public social services from across Europe to discuss the challenges and identify possible solutions, such as enhancing working conditions, addressing salary disparities, and implementing targeted recruitment strategies. ESN members from Germany and Ireland presented examples of pilot projects and programmes focusing on **digitalisation, staff development, and organisational change** so that social services professionals are empowered with the resources they need for effective and resilient service delivery.

ESN continues to call for a **Social Services Workforce Strategy** which stresses the pivotal role of regulation, registration, and accreditation, specialist education, ongoing training, and mutual recognition of qualifications within the EU, as well as further measures to create a dynamic and attractive environment for social services professionals.



***The EU approach, combining policy initiatives, funding support, and skills development, reflects a commitment to nurturing a resilient social services workforce capable of meeting evolving demands."***

Dana Bachmann, Head, Social Protection Unit,  
European Commission





## The Future of the Welfare State Recommendations from Social Services

### Online, 14 March

In March, ESN joined forces with Eurodiaconia to present recommendations to the European Commission and national governments on the importance of prioritising investment in social services, following the publication of a report from the High Level Group on the Future of the Welfare State. Bringing the voice, knowledge and expertise of over 230 public authorities responsible for social services and non-for-profit providers of social services across Europe, these joint recommendations aimed to address the main trends, challenges, and opportunities in social services from three main perspectives:

- Implementation of EU legal and policy frameworks
- Financing
- Challenges intrinsic to the sector, such as work-force related matters, digitalisation related trends and the growing complexity and evolution of the needs of people using social services.

Members of both organisations shared their first-hand experience of delivering social services, and possible solutions such as:

- More flexible national legislation, so that national and local social services can adapt to changing circumstances more quickly;

- More support for the social services workforce and service users to adapt to new technology;
- Better integration between the different systems used by the diverse agencies involved in the delivery of social services.



***Financing should be an incentive to promote a new model of care based on the family, home and the community."***

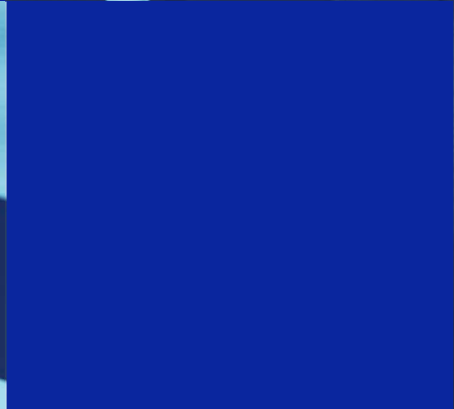
Alfonso Lara Montero, CEO,  
European Social Network

# NETWORK

with Key Decision-Makers  
and Peers across Europe



PO 11 11  
2023  
European Social  
Services Awards



31st European Social Services Conference

## Advancing social services

The role of technology in promoting autonomy &amp; inclusion

Malmö, 14 - 16 June 2023

Technology is increasingly transforming social services. While Covid-19 accelerated the pace, because of the need to provide care and support remotely, many social services professionals were already using remote video counselling and monitoring, smartphone apps, online peer support, electronic records, intelligent meters and sensors in people's homes. Technology and digitalisation also have the potential to enable greater equality in accessing social services.

Almost **700 social services leaders** from **39 countries** came together in Malmö between 14-16 June to examine the implications of this transformation in the delivery of social services, and how **technology** can promote **autonomy** and **inclusion**. Discussions centred on the growing use of AI and data analytics to predict need and allocate services, the use of digital tools for case management or to extend social protection coverage, and the ethical implications of these changes.

Experts and representatives from public social authorities presented compelling examples of how digital inclusion has had a positive impact on social services, while also addressing the challenges. Through the different sessions, participants could learn about the digital tools available to reach out to young people at risk of substance abuse; assisted living technology to monitor older people at risk from falls cognitive deterioration; or the use of technology in social care.

The conference highlighted the importance of striking a balance between leveraging the benefits of digital resources and upholding the core values of the social

services sector. For example, AI has the capability to anticipate and mitigate potential risks, but bias against families with disabilities and racial minorities can occur. A person-centred approach is key. By using technology responsibly, social services can harness its potential to improve outcomes, enhance efficiency, and promote inclusivity while safeguarding against potential risks and biases.



***It is now time for social services to be supported to make the necessary investments to be at the forefront of the digital transformation."***

Geoff Mulgan, Professor of Collective Intelligence,  
University College, London, United Kingdom

*Effective utilisation of AI empowers social workers to excel in their core strengths of empathy, intuition, and experience, but it is our responsibility to prevent those systems from perpetuating historical injustices and biases.”*

Anamika Barman-Adhikari, Associate Professor,  
University of Denver, USA



Hosted by:



Malmö stad

Supported by:



Swedish Presidency  
of the Council of the  
European Union



Sveriges  
Kommuner  
och Regioner



**Deloitte.**



# Co-creating Future Social Services

European Social Services Conference 2024

**Register Now!**

26-28 June 2024  
Antwerp, Belgium



At the 32nd edition of the European Social Services Conference, we will discuss how we can co-create community-based social services, with a specific focus on Co-Creating:

- Cities Social Inclusion
- Responses to Manage the Future Workforce
- Digital Transformation in Social Services.

Join us to help shape the social services of the future!

Participate at the European Social Services Conference.

Hosted by the City of Antwerp



Confirmed partners until now:

**Deloitte.**



## SHARE

- Contribute to the expertise of social services professionals on the frontline.

## LEARN

- Join stimulating discussions on new research, ideas and practices.

## DISCOVER NEW TRENDS

- Hear ideas from our partners on how to transform public services in our Exhibition Area.

## GET INSPIRED

- Listen to inspiring speakers from European and national policymaking, academia, industry, third sector, the media, and people with care and social services experience.

## BUILD KNOWLEDGE

- Discuss with peers how we can co-create community-based social services and promote sustainable, integrated social welfare at local level.

# Co-creating Future Social Services

European Social Services Conference

Book your place at [www.essc-eu.org/register](http://www.essc-eu.org/register)

Visit [essc-eu.org](http://essc-eu.org) to find out more

## European Social Network

### Industry Partnerships 2024



# Join our Community of Partners

Partnering with the European Social Network (ESN) means reaching one of your key audiences—national, regional, and local administrations that manage and oversee Europe’s social services —the core members of ESN.

These agencies have a significant impact on how national policy is formulated and enacted.

ESN provides access to 180 member organisations from national, regional, county and local levels, and the senior leadership of each respective social services organisation in 34 countries.

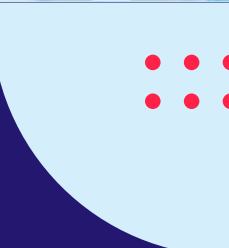
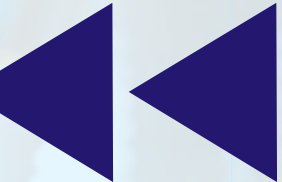
Our associate members include social services professional associations, higher education, and research organizations who participate in the collective work of our Network.

In short, ESN is the **Network of Social Services Leaders in Europe.**

Learn More and Partner with Us!

Get in touch with ESN CEO [alfonso.montero@esn-eu.org](mailto:alfonso.montero@esn-eu.org) for more information





***ESN and the annual conference provide an invaluable platform for Deloitte to interact with social service experts worldwide and collaborate and co-create the future of human services.”***

Josh Hjartarson PhD, Global Leader for Human and Social Services, Deloitte Canada

Hosted by:



CITY OF  
ZAGREB

In partnership with:



Established in 2019, The European Social Services Awards (ESSA) recognise innovation and excellence in social services, shining a spotlight on successful new approaches and current practice.

In 2023 the Awards recognised the organisations and people rethinking their services to provide care which is centred around the person, coordinated between services and professionals and enables people to live independent lives and be fully included in their communities



***Winning the European Social Services Award is a tremendous honour for The Social Atelier and the City of Osijek. It means the acknowledgement of our dedicated efforts in fostering dialogue, empowering marginalised groups or underrepresented individuals, and promoting community development."***

Lejla Sehic Relic,  
City of Osijek, Croatia

Winner of the Excellence in Cities Award 2023



*Events like the European Social Services Awards remind me just how valuable our human capital in Europe is.”*

Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner,  
Jobs and Social Rights



# Winners

## Service Delivery

**Coffee and Community: Tackling Rural Isolation**  
Rural Coffee Caravan, United Kingdom



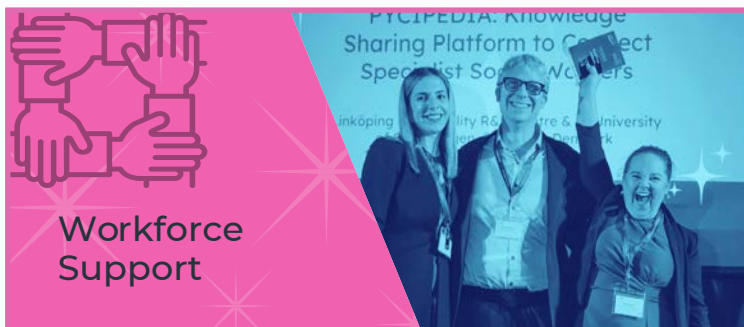
## Collaborative Practice

**The Sharing Factory**  
Public Centre for Social Welfare, Kortrijk, Belgium



## Workforce Support

**PYCIPEDIA: Knowledge Sharing Platform to Connect Specialist Social Workers**  
Linköping Municipality R&D Centre & IT University of Copenhagen, Sweden



## Digital Transformation

**Automating Social Protection for Internally Displaced Persons in Ukraine**  
Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy and Ministry of Digital Transformation & Medirent, Ukraine



## Research and Evaluation

### Through the eyes of the child

The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) & Trinity College Dublin, Ireland



## Submissions for the 2024 European Social Services Awards open in spring 2024.

- Showcase the amazing work of your social services teams
- Highlight your team's innovative projects
- Learn from and share your experiences with other social services professionals across Europe

Visit <https://essa-eu.org/> to find out how you can get involved.

## Excellence in Cities

### Social Atelier

City of Osijek, Croatia





# Our Members

**ESN** brings together **175** organisations in **34** countries, representing more than **1 million senior social services professionals** across Europe and beyond. Our membership includes national associations of directors of social services; national, regional, and local departments of social welfare and social services in ministries, regions, counties, cities, and municipalities; universities, national schools, or applied research institutes working on social services improvement; and regulators and inspection agencies.



# Join the European Social Network

The largest community of social services  
leaders in Europe



## Become a member

Our capacity and knowledge building activities are open to all our members.

Membership Types

### Core

Public authorities and associations of social services directors in Europe. This membership level also includes Council members who help guide ESN policy direction and are eligible to become Board members.

### Associate

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

For more information on how to join, contact ESN at [membership@esn-eu.org](mailto:membership@esn-eu.org)





*Membership enables us to exchange experiences, learn from best practices, and create individual collaborations with other members of the network, thereby strengthening and improving social services in the City of Zagreb. In addition, the advocacy role of ESN, which strongly contributes to highlighting the importance of investment in social services at the level of all member states, is of inestimable importance to us.”*

Zorana Uzelac Bošnjak, City of Zagreb –  
City Office for Social Protection, Health, War Veterans and People with Disabilities

# Governance

## The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees are legally responsible for ESN's governance. 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 and are in regular communication throughout the year. Trustees do not receive payment for their work on behalf of ESN.

## Current Trustees are:



**Christian Fillet**, Director, City of Bruges, Belgium, ESN Chair



**Sandra Babič**, Director, Centre of Social Work, Pomurje, Slovenia



**Georgia Chimbani**, Director, Adult and Community Services, Suffolk County Council, United Kingdom



**Alfred Grixti**, Chief Executive Officer, Foundation of Social Welfare Services, Malta



**Jukka Lindberg**, Chief Executive Officer, Welbeing Services, County of Kainuu, Finland



**Arnaud Lopez**, Director of Child Protection and Social Affairs in County Council, Hauts-sur-Seine Department, France



**Farid Mammadov**, Chairman of the Board, DOST Agency, Azerbaijan



**Graham Owen**, European Affairs Lead, Association of Directors of Social Welfare Services, Sweden



**Aðalbjörg Traustadóttir**, Head of Office for Disability Policy and Practice, City of Reykjavík - Department of Welfare, Iceland



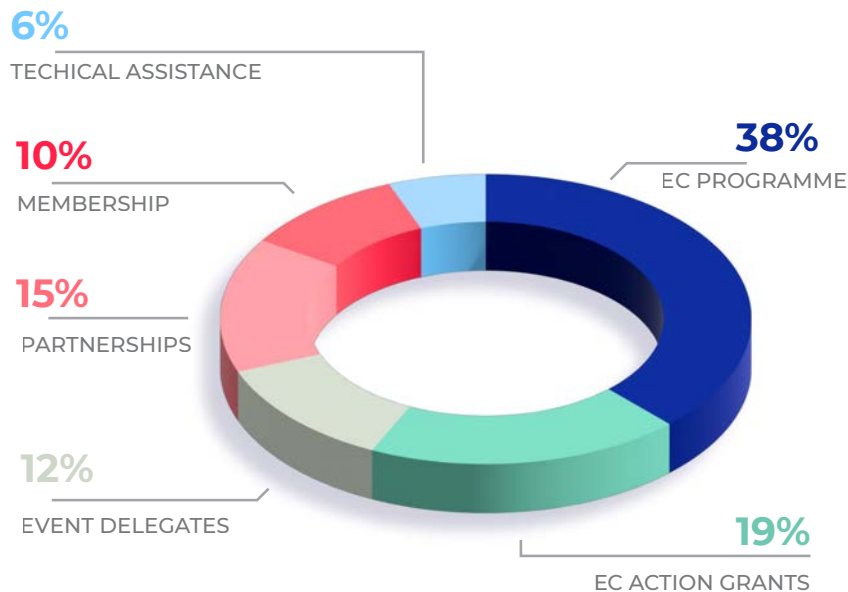
**Zorana Uzelac Bošnjak**, Assistant Head of Policy, City of Zagreb, City Office for Social Protection, Health, War Veterans and People with Disabilities, Croatia

## The Council

The Council consists of 24 national and regional organisations that bring together directors of social services and associations with expertise on 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 each year.

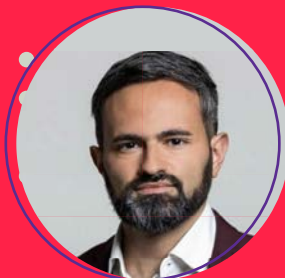
## Finance

ESN's financing comes from a variety of sources. In 2021 ESN signed a framework partnership agreement with the European Commission (EC) for 2022-2025 under the EaSI programme for employment and social innovation and applies annually for a grant to implement the activities co-funded by the European Commission. In addition, ESN organises the European Social Services Conference and the European Social Services Awards as separate self-funded activities for which ESN works with institutional and private partners. Finally, ESN's growing Network of members contribute to its sustainability.



# Meet the Secretariat

The Secretariat, led by ESN's Chief Executive Officer, provides strategic, policy, communications, financial and administrative support to the network. It also manages the network's relationships with partners, including the European Commission, national governments, and private partners.



**ALFONSO LARA-MONTERO**  
Chief Executive Officer



**ALVARO SANCHEZ**  
Finance and HR Manager



**CATALINA MARIAN**  
Executive and Business Support Officer



**TANJA SHEIKHI**  
Senior Membership and Operations Officer



**FRANCESCO CAPUANI**  
Development Coordinator



**TIM BROHEE**  
Junior Membership and Operations Officer



**LOURDES TELLO**  
Policy and Project Officer



**RIOHNACH HYLAND**  
Junior Events Officer



**CHRISTINA VARTOUMIAN**  
Junior Communications Officer



**MARTIN LICHTÉ**  
Senior Policy Officer



**ANJA OSOJNIK**  
Project Coordinator



**JOSÉ IGLESIAS**  
Project Manager



**LORENZA AMBROSJ**  
Junior Membership  
and Operations Officer



**ELENI KEFALLINOU**  
Project Officer



**VESA LATIFI**  
Project Support  
Officer



**ANA GOMES**  
Communications  
Assistant



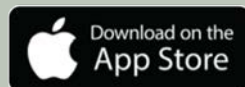
**STEFANOS  
MICHELAKAKIS**  
Projects Assistant



**TEA ISMAILAI**  
Policy Assistant

# Stay in touch with ESN

Download our App – Search for European Social Network on Google and Apple IOS



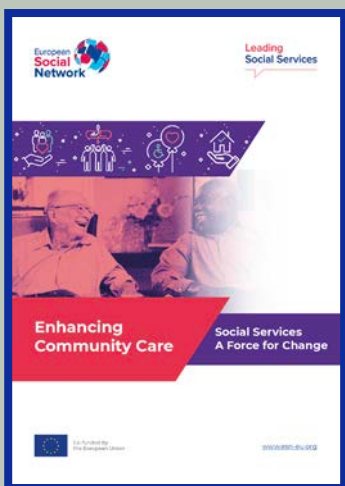
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