



Working Group Social Services Digitalisation 2020

Concept Note

Contact

Alfonso Montero
Chief Executive
Alfonso.montero@esn-eu.org

European Social Network
Avenue des Arts 3-4-5
8th Floor,
1210 Brussels, Belgium

+ 32 (0) 251 110 93
info@esn-eu.org
www.esn-eu.org



Introduction

The European Social Network (ESN) launched a working group which will run between 2019-2021 to examine the increasing role of technology in the delivery of social services.

The social services sector is cash-strapped and under immense pressure across Europe. It's not a place that draws heavy investment to inspire technological innovation. But in a time of reducing public budgets and an aging global population, it is exactly this kind of technological innovation that can help organisations do more with less resources. Ultimately, the increasing role of technology has the potential to improve the quality of care and lives of service users.

The increasing role of technology in the delivery of social services takes many forms such as the increasing use of artificial intelligence, fast and effective case management systems, technology driven services, assistive technology and much more. These technological advancements can help improve the delivery of social services, but it is also important to understand the challenges digitalisation raises and how we overcome them, such as the cost of new technology and how to ensure privacy and security are protected.

The working group will act as a vehicle for mutual learning between social services and technology providers across Europe on the effective use of technology in social services, culminating in a collection of practice examples. Each meeting of the working group will focus on a different aspect of digitalisation, foreseen as follows: case management (2019), tools for decision-making (2020), and assisted living (2021).

Every meeting will cover the following: ethical implications in the use of digital systems, legal background, barriers and opportunities. Each meeting will identify practice examples as real experiences from working group members as basis for the discussion of real experiences of implementation of technological and digital processes in social services.

Aims

For participants from social services and beyond (health, education, housing, employment, justice) to engage in mutual learning and an exchange of practices on the role of technology in the delivery of care across Europe. Participants from the technology sector could also be invited to present the work they are carrying out on digitalisation in social services and improving the lives of service users. The activities of the working group will lead to a collection of practices which will be published on

European Social Network
Avenue des Arts 3-4-5
8th Floor,
1210 Brussels, Belgium

+ 32 (0) 251 110 93
info@esn-eu.org
www.esn-eu.org



ESN's practice library and the creation of online tools to assist social services in the digitalisation process.

The working group will meet at least once per year in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Requirements

- **Expertise** – ESN is looking for organisations who have experience or expertise in the use of technology in the delivery of social services.
- **Language** - Participants should have a good level of English as the answers to the questionnaire and subsequent information requested will be in English and the meeting will also be held in English.

Participation

- Contribute a practice example and information on policies supporting digitalisation in your country through ESN's questionnaire.
- Actively participate at the working group meeting.
- Participants may also be asked to give a presentation to the working group about their practice.
- The total working time for participation each year is approximately three days (completing the questionnaire, providing any extra information to ESN, and participation in the meeting).
- ESN will cover the costs of participation, travel, and accommodation for one person per member organisation selected.

Applying

- **Application** – Interested organisations must complete a questionnaire. It will be used to determine the expertise and interests of applicants. Please take the time to complete your selected questionnaire accurately and in as much detail as possible.
- **Selection** - ESN will select participants based on the answers to the questionnaire, so those applying must ensure the questionnaire has been thoroughly completed. ESN will select a maximum of 20 participants.

European Social Network
Avenue des Arts 3-4-5
8th Floor,
1210 Brussels, Belgium

+ 32 (0) 251 110 93
info@esn-eu.org
www.esn-eu.org



- Organisations will be able to apply to participate in more than one year of the working group.

Theme for the 2020 working group meeting

ESN has previously studied the role of technology in the delivery of social services. It was the one of the main topics of the conference in Valetta, Malta 2017. The title of the conference was Transforming lives through innovation and technology. The aim was to explore how innovation and technology can help create better social services for the future.

Aside from this, the role of technology features as a part of other work and publications ESN produces. In our publication, Investing in the social services workforce, technology featured as a means to reduce the workload and administrative burden suffered by social services. This report also highlights how technology can also be used to assist front line care staff with difficult aspects of the job. Technology was also a recurring theme in our 2015 report Social planning at the local level. In this report, in this report it is highlighted that technology can be used for data collection to then be used in strategic planning.

The working group meeting aims to bring together these strands of ESN's work to look at an overview of the different ways technology can be used to improve the delivery of social services and improve the quality of life for people using services. Due to the impact that Covid-19 has had on social services as a whole, the initial plan for the 2020 working group meeting to focus on platforms supporting decision-making has been adapted to address improvement in digitisation to address the impact of the pandemic on services.

Covid-19 and digitalisation-enabled social services

In times of crisis, industries may change direction, business models adapt, and people become readier to embrace new ideas. Tested to the limits by the pandemic, social care and social services have been under the spotlight. However, the coronavirus response has seen social care and social services work to address the challenges surrounding self-isolation and social distancing.

For example, many services have had to speed up their process of digitalising procedures and assessments. They are also using digital tools such as video conferencing and software to enable remote connections and transparency. Many have increased and reinforced the use of telecare to support people to stay at home,

European Social Network
Avenue des Arts 3-4-5
8th Floor,
1210 Brussels, Belgium

+ 32 (0) 251 110 93
info@esn-eu.org
www.esn-eu.org



while others have developed tracking apps to unlock insights on symptoms, spread and severity.

As such, now may be an ideal time to create a more effective and responsive framework to care for the vulnerable. The coronavirus outbreak has highlighted how inadequate paper processes are for a sector vital to society and equally overstretched.

We would like to identify and analyse examples of technology enabling processes to support the delivery of care for the most vulnerable. These may well involve digitising care planning processes, app-based care evidencing tools, digitising residents' care interactions, integrated systems for digital reporting. Covid-19 has proved that social services and social care are as important as health care. These digital improvements can help advance the sector by identifying trends, improving care delivery, enable links with health and other services.

European Social Network
Avenue des Arts 3-4-5
8th Floor,
1210 Brussels, Belgium

+ 32 (0) 251 110 93
info@esn-eu.org
www.esn-eu.org

