

ANNUAL REVIEW 2021

**The Social Services
Network for Europe**



The European Social Network is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment 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, partners and colleagues

I am very happy and really proud to introduce our overview of the work of the European Social Network during 2021. As the pandemic continued to unfold across Europe, ESN continued to support our members through many interesting and useful activities and began to gather inputs on lessons learned, so social services can emerge from the crisis more resilient and better prepared and equipped for future shocks.

Our online meetings were places where our members could share their concerns on tackling poverty, loneliness and providing social care in a virtual world, as well as exchanging experiences and sharing expertise in inspiring sessions about the functioning of social services in Covid-19 times. Towards the end of 2021, the temporary relaxation of restrictions meant that we were even able to meet in person at our annual seminar in Slovenia on social services' resilience and our Members

Forum in Brussels, the discussions underlining the important work our members undertake to support the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Covid-19 has had a huge impact on everyone: the young and less young have been hit by a battery of unpopular but necessary measures and our communities are becoming more polarised as an end to the pandemic continues to elude us. Many caregivers and professionals from the welfare sector are continuing to face additional pressures. However, Covid-19 has also shown the importance of solidarity, resilience and perseverance - the three crucial qualities we need to get through the crisis. These are also the three basic elements that form, as it were, the common thread of the activities and the content of this annual report.

Finally, a sincere word of thanks to the ESN Board, our secretariat and, of course, to all our members and their employees. I wish everyone a healthy 2022 and the opportunity to continue to learn and support each other through the Network to build resilient social services across Europe.

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 2021, a year in which we learned how to live with Covid-19 and its impact on our lives, work, and social services. Covid-19 has tested our immune systems, but also our social welfare systems. The Covid-19 crisis has led to additional vulnerabilities, particularly among older people, children and youth, those who rely on social services, and people who lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

The pandemic has shown that societies without effective social welfare systems are susceptible to more significant social fallout during crises. Therefore, there has been growing recognition of social services as a type of social immune system, which has boosted the debate about social protection, a new model of care, and the crucial role of social services in promoting social inclusion and community development.

The European Commission has defined Next Generation EU funds as the once-in-a-lifetime chance to emerge stronger from the pandemic. Indeed, national authorities have the opportunity

to cooperate with regional and local social services to employ these funds for the reform and modernisation of social services. This will ensure that social services fulfil their role both as a safety net that protects the most vulnerable and as an investment that safeguards us against the worst impact of any crisis. This is how we would like to build back better by levelling up the people who need it the most.

Building back better implies that recovery should be sustainable and resilient. The concept of resilience has been increasingly central to our work this year. In October, we organised our first in-person seminar in two years in Ljubljana, and we also brought our members together at the Members Forum to discuss our future strategy, which will largely focus on social services modernisation and resilience. Our annual seminar was the occasion to look at how social services are transforming the way they work, support the populations they serve, and what needs to be done to ensure future crisis-proof and sustainable public social services.

ESN closes 2021 looking forward to the European Social Services Conference in Hamburg, where social services professionals will meet to discuss how European and national recovery tools and the innovations implemented so far can be used to rethink the planning, implementation, and evaluation of community-based social services.

We count on your support to continue building resilient and sustainable social services and hope to see you all there!

With best wishes,



Alfonso Lara Montero
Chief Executive Officer



2021 IN NUMBERS

153 members in **34** Countries



38,185 Website Users



ESN organised **9** Events



ESN spoke at **17** Events



3931 Publication Downloads



429 Participants at EaSI Co-funded Activities



544,200 Twitter Impressions



18,694 News Subscribers



European Social Services Awards

50 Submitted Projects

16,836 Online Votes

European Social Services Conference

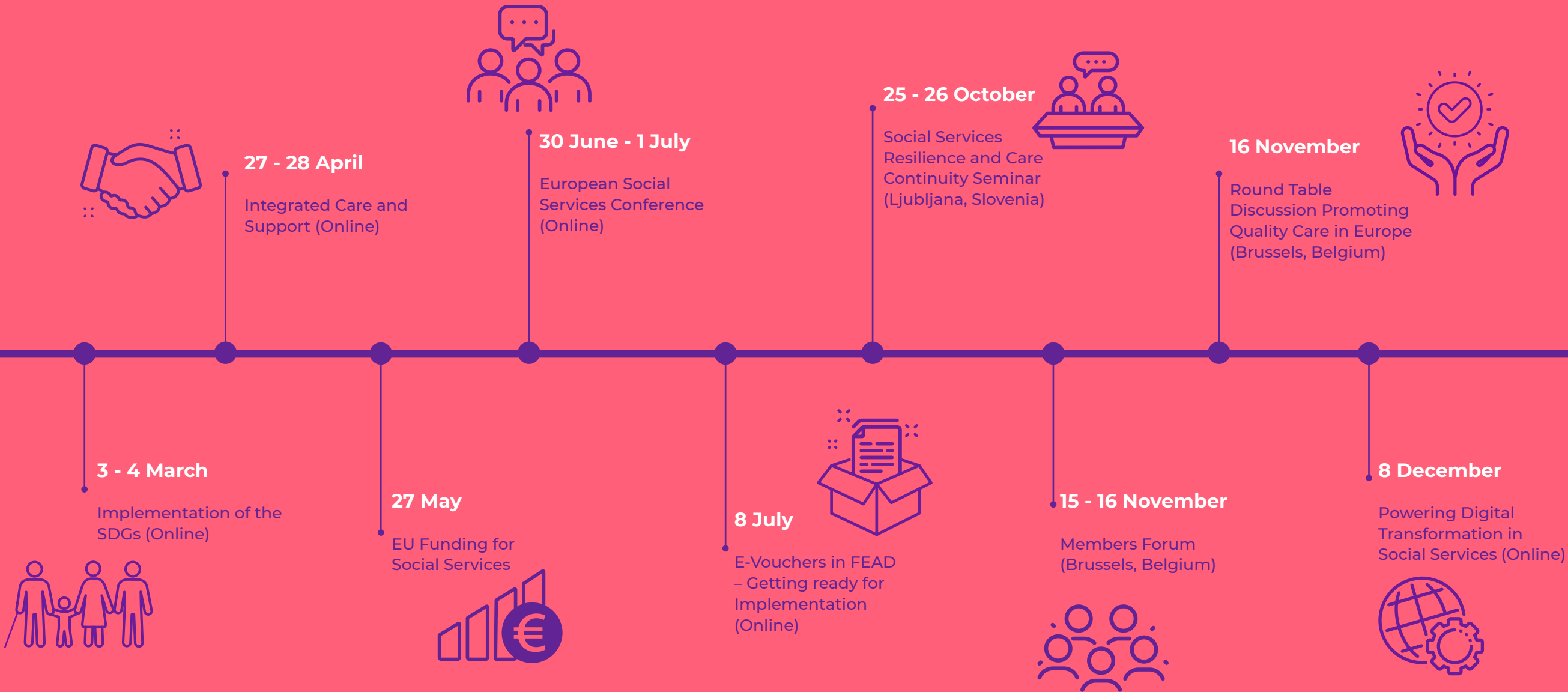
27 Speakers

257 Participants

26 Sessions

2021 Activities

2021 Activities



2022 at a Glance



Working Groups

- Social Services Resilience and Transformation Working Group
- European Semester and EU Funding Reference Group
- Social Services Quality Assessment Working Group



Annual Seminar on Integrated Minimum Income and Social Services Programmes

European Parliament Round Table

European Social Services Conference

European Social Services Awards



Social Innovation Projects

- RuralCare
- Reticulate
- xETIU
- Social Services Helpdesk

Our 2022-2025 Programme

2022 → 2023 → 2024 → 2025

Working Groups: Quality, Transformation, EU Semester & Funding

Annual Roundtable at European Parliament

Series of workshops on social services workforce (2023-2025)

Annual Seminar

Integrated Minimum Income & Social Services

Annual Seminar

Excellence in Community Care for People with Disabilities

Annual Seminar

Community and Family Support for Children and Youth

Workshop on Long-Term Care

Members Forum



SHARE

**Current Policy
and Practice**

Resilience Panel Discussion

As part of the 2021 Members Forum (see page 44), ESN held a panel discussion with public social services directors and senior professionals, policymakers and researchers to discuss what needs to be done from the European to local levels to ensure crisis-proof and sustainable public social services.

“
In the wake of the pandemic, resilience is key when looking at the ways in which social services are transforming – how they work and service the populations that need them.”

Alfonso Lara Montero,
Chief Executive Officer,
European Social Network



The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the critical reality that social services are battling a higher workload with fewer resources.

“
The trend of a shrinking and greying EU demography is resulting in an increased demand for long-term care and a lower tax base, creating the perfect storm, of having to do more with less.”

Mihai Palimariciuc, Policy Analyst, European Policy Centre in Brussels



Katarina Ivanković-Knežević, Social Policy Director at the European Commission, highlighted the role the European Commission could play in better supporting social services. Ms Ivanković-Knežević proposed that the European Commission’s country-specific recommendations and their implementation monitoring take place over several years to take into consideration how much time is required for policy reforms to be implemented.

A key message in the discussions was the crucial role that social services play in mitigating the social consequences of the Covid-19 crisis. However, public social services can only achieve this if they receive appropriate support to design and build programmes that are effective for the needs of the communities they serve. As the network for public social services, ESN plays a vital role in providing a link for collaboration and discussion between social services planners, managers, and providers from the local and national to the European level.

“
Social Services are both a crucial safety net and an investment in people’s development, hence we need to put in place the tools to promote their resilience and make them better crisis-proof for the future.”

Katarina Ivanković-Knežević,
Social Policy Director at the
European Commission



Quality Care Round Table

The right to quality social services is a key element of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). But how to put this right to quality into practice? ESN members discussed this question with EU decision makers, care quality experts, representatives of people using social services and social services professionals at a roundtable on 16 November.

Reforming quality standards towards outcomes-based

An important element of ensuring quality care across Europe is the regulation of standards, as well as putting in place the right tools and conditions for professionals, using funding and contracting mechanisms that help to create a working environment conducive to quality care.

Ger Brophy, Chief Social Worker at TUSLA, the Irish Child and Family Agency, reinforced this by highlighting the need for quality guiding tools to support social care professionals in implementing quality standards in their day-to-day work. TUSLA, for example, has developed the so-called 'Empowering Practitioners and Practice Initiative,' which is an online tool that supports new social workers in their first year of service.

Designing services to meet the needs of people using them

“

I came into children's care because I really wanted to help children using my experience of growing up in care. If we give vulnerable children the same loving support as their peers, we can create a good system that gets positive results. We need to start talking about solutions and put them into practice.”



Chris Wild,
Member of Experts by Experience Board
at the Independent Review of Children's
Social Care England, United Kingdom

“

The insights shared in the ESN round-table reveal a very complex situation. Focusing on individual needs is, in my opinion, one of the main building blocks of quality assurance of social services.”

Radka Maxová,
S&D Group, Czechia



Having people who use services involved in decisions about their care, is also the aim of the 'triangular care-counselling model', applied by the Municipality of Esbjerg in Denmark, explained Elsebeth Nebeling from the local social services department.

“

When assessing which type of long-term care is required for a person, our social workers have a tri-partite discussion with the person, including their family and the professional involved.”

Elsebeth Nebeling,
Municipality of Esbjerg, Denmark



“

The evidence shows the ongoing need for investment in social services across Europe. I urge ESN to continue to gather the data and best practices, which provide the impetus for further change.”

Dragoș Pișlaru MEP,
Renew Europe, Romania



Read our publications on social services quality



Powering Digital Transformation

In partnership with:

IBM Watson Health™

ESN's report Transforming Social Services through Digitalisation found that public social services have increasingly shown a willingness to invest in existing and new digital solutions, such as ICT infrastructure, the use of artificial intelligence, fast and effective case management systems, technology driven services, and assistive technology.

These technological advancements can help improve the delivery of social services by making the access and sharing of information simpler, improving coordination between services, promoting early intervention and supporting decision making. However, it is also important to understand the challenges that come with digitalisation and how we overcome them, such as the cost of new technology, how to ensure privacy, the way in which data is held and shared, and how security is protected.

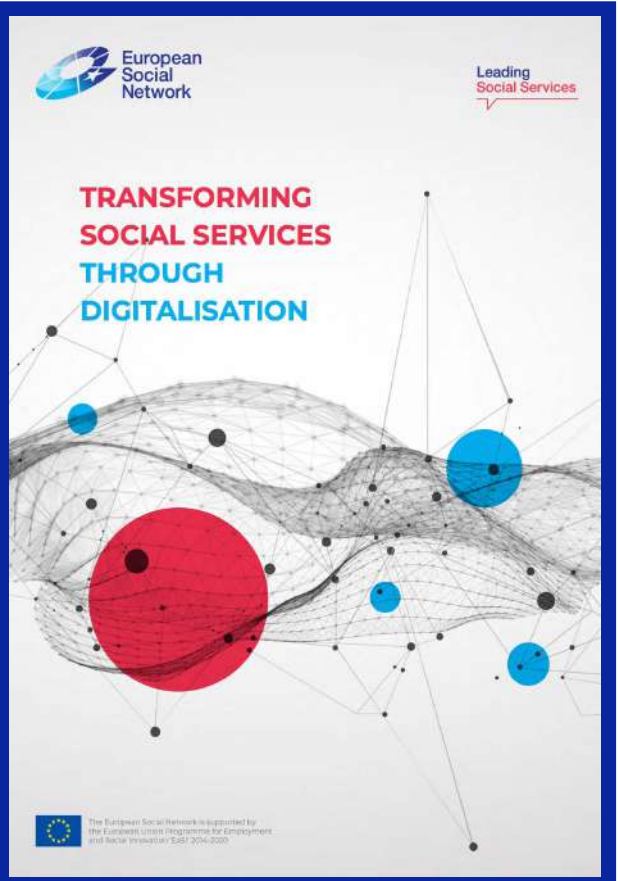
On 8 December, ESN held an online meeting seeking to continue the conversation on digitalisation through mutual learning and an exchange of practices on the role of technology in the delivery of care across Europe.

Keynote speaker Antonio López Peláez, Professor of Social Work and Social Services at the National University of Distance Education in Spain, shared his research on key digital trends in social services.

“

Without digital inclusion there cannot be inclusive social welfare and inclusive social services. This is the real challenge we face.”

Antonio López Peláez, Professor of Social Work and Social Services at the National University of Distance Education in Spain



ESN members from Northern Ireland and Sweden shared practices of digital tools for workforce training and developing welfare technologies respectively.

“

Whatever direction we go in, as we proceed, it's important to keep the end-user at the centre of everything we do. Our focus is on encouraging people, in particular our social care and social work registrants, to engage and see the value of digital learning for their professional development.”

Mairead Harkin, Workforce Development Officer, Northern Ireland Social Care Council



The discussion centred around the importance of having a co-design process that includes the end-user in the development and testing of digital tools. In this way, potential inequalities can be avoided and ensure that digitalisation empowers those that work for and use social services.

E-Vouchers in FEAD – Getting ready for Implementation

In partnership with:



Exploring digital tools to support the most vulnerable

ESN is keen to explore innovative tools so that our members can provide for the most vulnerable in different ways. Indeed, 72 % of our members are supportive of using cards and electronic vouchers to deliver food and material assistance to people in need, and money from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) can be used for this purpose. Therefore, in July ESN organised a meeting with managing authorities to discuss the usefulness and feasibility of voucher-based solutions.

Reported benefits include a reduction of costs and administrative burdens, increased efficiency i.e. through reduced transportation and storage costs, and local economy support thanks to an increase in local merchant sales. Although, issues were raised as to whether the anonymity of beneficiaries could be maintained when using electronic payment cards.



E-vouchers to support older and homeless people in Romania during Covid-19

The hot meals programme in Romania is one of the first e-voucher based projects implemented under FEAD. After six months implementation, the Ministry reported that: beneficiaries felt supported in difficult times, local restaurants continued operating despite Covid-19 restrictions, and the managing authority found an effective way to provide food for people most in need.

“
Our 2021 hot meals programme, funded under the FEAD, was designed to deliver food to 300,000 beneficiaries in over 1,200 towns and villages during Covid-19. Given the scope and context E-vouchers were the only manageable option.”

Simion Alb, Ministry of EU Projects, Romania



BUILD

**Knowledge to
Promote Quality
Services**

Integrated Care and Support Working Group

On 27 and 28 April, we held a webinar to discuss how integration of care and support for older people with complex needs can be strengthened across Europe and what role public social services may play in this. This was the last meeting of ESN's four-year working group on integrated care and support across the lifecycle.

Improving quality of life for older people at the centre of integration efforts

Improving the care and quality of life of older people was identified by participants as one of the main drivers of service integration in the area of long-term care. OECD researcher Eileen Rocard reinforced the findings highlighting how better integration can delay the development of health problems and long-term care needs, reduce the risk of hospitalisations and avoid frequent readmissions to emergency health services.



“

We need to shift the way we think about long-term care. Promoting quality of life should be at the centre. Integrating managing of transitions between care settings contributes to that goal.”

Stefania Ilinca, Advisor on Long-Term Care, World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe; Researcher, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy & Research



Unlocking the potential of integrated care

The need to establish a joint vision among the different services, sectors and professionals at local and regional levels is a common thread. To make that shift, public authorities need political backing at all levels to allow them to invest resources to develop truly integrated services which put the life quality of older people at the centre.

Members discussed the latest policies and research on integrated care and support; reflected on the findings of an ESN survey on how social services are implementing integrated care and support for older people with complex needs across Europe; and shared examples of best practice, on the implementation of services provided and their evaluation.

“

One of the first tasks is to ensure that we are ‘on the same page’ – understand [the] problem, terms, concepts and rules equally. Understanding and knowing each other and the problem better make a common ground for cooperation and co-ordinated solutions.”

Mārtiņš Moors, Riga City Council Welfare Department, Latvia

A report presenting the details of the questionnaires, practices, and meeting discussions of ESN's Working Group on Integrated Care and Support between 2017-2021 was published in September, analysing the integrated provision of support and social services for four population groups: Children and families with a focus on child protection; Youth with a focus on young people leaving state care; Adults with mental health problems and Older people with complex needs.



Annual Seminar on Resilience and Care Continuity

In partnership with the Association of Centres for Social Work and the Social Chamber of Slovenia

Side event to the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU



ESN members gathered for the first in-person ESN seminar in two years in October 2021 in Ljubljana during the Slovenian presidency of the Council of the European Union. The seminar on Social Services Resilience and Care Continuity focused on the response of public social services to Covid-19, which highlighted the stresses and weaknesses within the sector since the 2008 financial crisis.

The seminar not only highlighted good practice on resilience strategies and programmes from ESN members, but also looked at the resources needed to support social services at local and national levels to ensure they are better prepared to provide quality and continued care during future crises.

The National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRP) are one source of investment for social services at the local and regional level to bring about this transformation.



“
As part of France’s recovery and resilience plans, we want to develop new care models, and have implemented reflections involving architects, local communities, field workers and people using services themselves.”

Virginie Lasserre, Director-General for Social Cohesion,
Ministry of Solidarity and Health, France

Social Services Resilience and Care Continuity 25-26 October SLOVENIA 2021



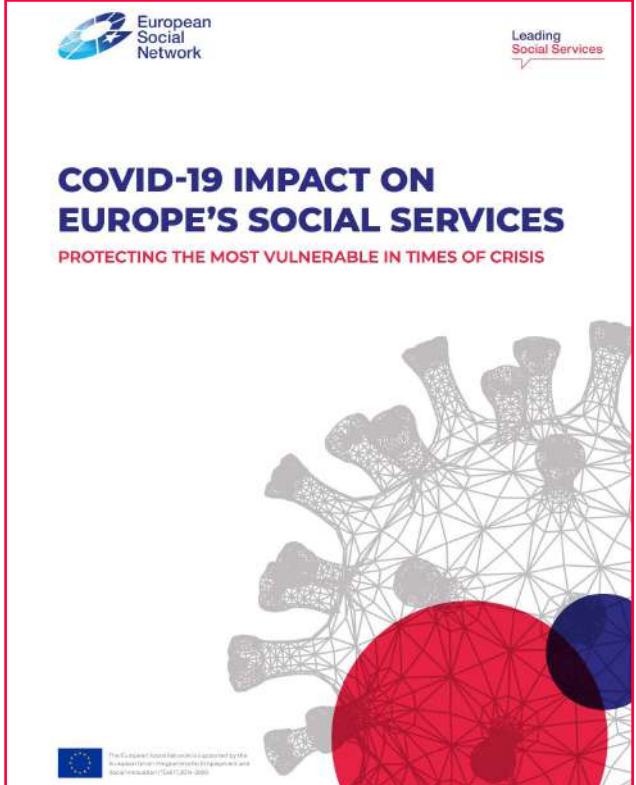
Another message was that care models must be re-tooled towards a more personalised and needs-based assessment of the workforce and people who use social services. The transition from institutional to home and community-based care, powered by a well valued workforce, was identified as a central component for building social services provision resilient enough to meet future needs.

“
Spain has made a firm commitment to ensure that its recovery and resilience plan includes reforms and investment in social policy. Social services must be person-centred, focused on home – and community-based care. Likewise, innovation and digital transformation will improve knowledge and processes to support more evidence-based decision-making.”

Patricia Bezunartea Barrio, Director-General of Family Diversity and Social Services, Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030, Spain

Covid-19 Impact on Europe’s Social Services

We launched this publication to report on the pandemic’s social impact on the most vulnerable, the challenges faced by social services to address the social consequences of the crisis, and the responses provided by the authorities and those at the frontline.



Social Innovation Projects

Rural Care

ESN is a partner of this project led by our member, the Regional Public Administration for Social Services in Castilla y León (Spain). The project will develop an integrated home-based model of care in rural areas. ESN is responsible for practice identification and analysis, knowledge transfer, communication and dissemination. The project, which started implementation in November 2020, has designed the new care model which is now being piloted.



Reticulate

A thirty-month project led by Tuscany (Italy), Reticulate started in November 2021 aimed at piloting an integrated system of social inclusion support through a ‘one-stop shop’ model for people furthest from the labour market. ESN will take care of organising peer reviews in countries which have been identified as having a support programme relevant for the model.



xEITU

Led by the Social Rights Department of the region of Asturias (Spain), this project, which started in November 2021, will test a new model of employment and social services coordination to transform the regional minimum income in a new model of social inclusion support. ESN will contribute with practice identification, knowledge transfer and dissemination.



INFORM

**International and
National Policy-Making**

EU Funding Working Group

Since 2014, ESN has tried to bridge the gap between European funding-related policy and decision-making and the planning, management and financing of public social services through its Reference Group on the European Semester.

In 2021, as the European Commission decided to replace the Semester with the Recovery and Resilience Facility, ESN transformed the Group to focus instead on EU Funding for Social Services. We shadowed the process for the submission of national Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) to the European Commission, analysing how far public social services were involved in drawing up the plans and identifying any problems and concerns. We undertook with our members a preliminary assessment of the NRRPs to analyse what was planned for social services and organised a webinar to assess their views of the submitted plans and share experiences of the process.



EUROPEAN FUNDING WORKING GROUP

Webinar | 27 May 2021 | Online

During the first meeting on 27 May, we heard from high-level EU officials and representatives from local public social services on their evaluation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans and possible recommendations for the future. In addition, we created a space for our members to share their experiences concerning the Plans during an open discussion session.

“
A more transparent process and the consultation of organisations working in the social field at an earlier stage would have led to a more social National Recovery and Resilience Plan.”

Monika Büning, Head of Department for International Affairs, National Association for Public and Private Welfare, Germany



FUNDING SOCIAL SERVICES RECOVERY

Anchoring social services in post-Covid national reform plans



The European Social Network is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation 'Erasmus+' 2014-2020.

Report

The outcomes of the meeting and the analysis provided by our members were compiled into the report 'Funding Social Services Recovery: Anchoring social services in post-Covid national reform plans'. It contains individual country profiles and policy recommendations based on the group's input, with 19 countries represented this year.

The report was shared with the European Commission (EC) to inform their process of evaluating the NRRPs. Group members have been regularly encouraged and supported to hold national meetings with EC representatives responsible for their countries. This has been the case so far for Spain, Italy and Romania.

IN PRACTICE

Bringing Europe closer to our local members

ESN organised a meeting of Spanish members in regional and local authorities with European Commission representatives led by Deputy Head of Unit, Isabelle Maquet. The meeting, which took place in February, was an opportunity for ESN members to explain their reform priorities to access EU recovery and resilience funding. In turn, the Commission underlined their recommendations to Spain in the areas of employment and social services coordination, pathways for minimum income beneficiaries and family support.

In cooperation with ESN member, the Lombardy Region, ESN organised a meeting of our Italian members in regional and local authorities with the European Commission, led by Ruth Paserman, Director for Investment. At the meeting held in April, Italian members fed back to the Commission on their participation in the recovery process and proposals for social services reform, highlighted their concerns and recommendations regarding the type of support they would need to implement the improvements.

In cooperation with our Romanian member CFEAS, responsible for social services training and development, ESN organised a meeting for Romania's municipalities social services and the European Commission, led by Head of Unit Jeroen Jutte. At the meeting, the representatives of the municipalities highlighted their concerns about how the process to design the recovery budget took place, their proposals for change, and reform programmes.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Working Group

ESN's Working Group on the SDGs aims to explore the role of social services in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda at national, regional and local levels. In March, representatives from social services from several European countries met to discuss their role in the implementation and achievement of SDG 16.2. – End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children.

During the webinar, participants discussed the international legal and policy frameworks countering the phenomenon of violence against children and learnt about best practices from France, Scotland and Spain. Covid-19 has exacerbated the issues of violence against children and highlighted the challenges public authorities face in protecting children from all forms of violence, such as lack of adequate legal and policy frameworks, law enforcement or funding of child-centred and family support programmes. They also made recommendations for the development and implementation of legislation, policy, strategies and programmes advancing SDG 16.2.



“Partnership is the only path to success. My mandate remains committed to working with all key stakeholders to mobilize action and make a difference on the ground. The members of your network – European Social Network – play a key role in this. By using your experience to highlight what needs to be done you can be amongst the strongest advocates for change.”

Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, United Nations

The discussion highlighted the crucial role of public social services in prevention and taking action to counter violence against children, given their statutory duty to protect children and young people. While focusing on the most vulnerable, national, regional and local strategies countering violence against children need to be centred around the rights and needs of children and should be accessible to all.

Investments in public social services and its workforce are also key in the fight against violence against children, so that they can be equipped with the necessary tools to adequately deal with these challenges.

As a follow-up to the meeting ESN produced a policy briefing presenting examples of legislation, policy and practice in three European countries, with recommendations for child protection to address the challenges identified in fighting violence against children.



European Social Network



The Sustainable Development Agenda: The Role of Social Services

SDG 16 on Ending Violence against Children





The European Social Network is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation 'EaSI' 2014-2020



ESN WORKING GROUP ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
2021 WORKING GROUP MEETING – 3 & 4 MARCH

Ending violence against children:
The role of public social services in the achievement of SDG 16.2.

Promoting Quality Community Care and Social Services

We made efforts to bring the outcomes of our publications and our proposals for a new model of social care and social services to high-level policy-makers and practitioners in Europe and beyond.

The European Commission (EC)

We organised two meetings with the Unit responsible for long-term care to discuss our findings and proposals for the future Commission's strategy on care alongside members from Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Spain and Sweden.

ESN is a member of the recently launched European Commission's platforms on homelessness and disability and participated at the opening meetings in December.

ESN was invited to participate as expert at an international peer review on active inclusion to present our findings and proposals on inclusive activation programmes.

We met EC officials to discuss our proposal for a framework of indicators to assess the quality of social services systems.

ESN has regularly contributed to dialogues led by the European Commission, particularly those related to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Semester and the Child Guarantee.



The Social Protection Committee (SPC)

We spoke on indicators to assess quality of social services and social care at a meeting of the indicators group of the SPC, which is responsible for finding common frameworks to measure progress in social policy areas like long-term care or social protection access.

The Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU

ESN's CEO Alfonso Lara Montero was invited to speak and represent the views of social services at Porto's Social Summit organised by the Portuguese government during their rotating presidency of the European Council. Alfonso spoke at the welfare and social protection session, led by Commissioner Nicolas Schmit, where he highlighted the importance of partnering with regional and local social services responsible for advancing social protection, and investing in the workforce, community and home-based services for older adults and family-based support for children as key for the implementation of European principles.

Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU

ESN member, Ana Aboy, Director at the social welfare department of the region of Galicia in Spain, spoke at the event organised by the Slovenian Presidency on the Child Guarantee. Ana presented an integrated debt mediation and housing support programme for families with children, as example of good practice of programmes that can be funded to support access to housing for families with children.

Council of Europe (CoE)

The CoE's Working Group on responses to violence against children invited ESN's CEO to present ESN's work on violence against children, share his observations on reporting child abuse, and make suggestions for further action in this area. Mr Montero acknowledged that proper reporting is key and that European recommendations would only be effective if local services are able to act on them.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

ESN co-facilitated a workshop with the OECD focusing on possible strategies and policies to address the critical issue of the global shortage of professional care workers. Participants discussed possible solutions such as greater recognition of the essential role of care workers, better career paths, skills development and a higher diversity of care jobs as well as increasing digitalisation of the care profession.

Stewards of Change

ESN's CEO spoke at the event of the US Stewards of Change Institute and Stanford's Centre for Population Health Studies on care coordination across sectors. The aim of this session was to showcase American colleagues ways in which health and social services are advancing coordination models and discuss with them the conditions that favour or hinder the implementation of these models.

Our participation in European consultations

We participated in the Committee of the Regions Stakeholder Consultation on a 'Future Plan for Care Workers and Care Services' to share our insights from previous work done on the workforce and the key role of the workforce in ensuring quality in long-term care.

We provided input to the European Commission's Consultation on 'the Green Paper on Ageing' and fed into the upcoming European Care Strategy to be launched in 2022.



NETWORK

with Key Decision-Makers
and Peers across Europe



Members Forum
June 2020 - London

TABLE
8

NAME	ORGANISATION
Laura Pollock	UK Children's Hospice Network
Simon Smith	Supporting People
Jonathan Webb	Recovery Group
John Smith	Services for People with Mental Health Problems
Matthew Webb	England's Social Services

2021 Members Forum

On 15 – 16 November 2021, ESN organised its four-yearly Members Forum in Brussels to evaluate and discuss the future activities of the Network and the direction we want to take together. Members evaluated the results of a members survey held in April which was used to identify key policy topics, communications objectives and how the Network could continue to develop.

Members reflected on how ESN’s work programme 2018-2021 supported social services in continuing to deliver quality care and support, and the proposed activities for the 2022-2025 European Commission (EC) Framework Partnership Agreement, providing thematic input through small group discussions.

The topics discussed included social services transformation and resilience, European funding for social services, integrated minimum income and social services programmes, the provision

of quality social care and social services, and the social services workforce. The outcomes of the discussions will form the basis for more detailed deliberations in specific working groups and events as part of ESN’s upcoming work programme.

Members discussed the development of the Network, identifying ways to grow the Network, increasing awareness of the benefits that our membership provides for current ESN members’ organisations, as well as encouraging new members to join. More opportunities to exchange knowledge and best practice nationally and across Europe was a key request from ESN members present. Members also identified ways to improve ESN communications to make them more targeted and accessible and gave valuable feedback on new initiatives such as an ESN podcast, due to be launched in 2022.



Leading
Social Services

Members Forum SHAPE ESN'S FUTURE 2021



“The activities and publications on different policy themes, focusing on the populations we work with, enable members to share experience, develop good practice guidelines and policy recommendations. We also appreciate the way ESN explores more crosscutting issues for social services, such as challenges related to the social services workforce, digitalization, or the development of integrated care services.”

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

ESN thanks all members who took part in both the survey and the Forum for their support and contributions in the strengthening and development of the Network. The outcomes from the discussions during the Members Forum will be key in the planning and development of our activities in the years ahead.

29th European Social Services Conference

In partnership with:

IBM Watson Health™



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Community care needs investment and reform to become a key pillar of social welfare

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken a grim toll on community social care across Europe. Lack of adequate investment had already left the sector without the necessary equipment to manage the crisis. In addition to questions about **funding**, serious ethical concerns have been raised about the unacceptable number of excess deaths in care homes and staff as well as how to ensure safety and support of **the workforce** within a fragmented system of provision. Accessing real-time data using **digital technology** to monitor community-based services is therefore vital in terms of future crises preparedness.

The 29th edition of the European Social Services Conference on 30 June-1 July saw the participation of more than 250 social services leaders from 32 countries coming together online to discuss how care in the community needs rethinking to better support its workforce, be effectively resourced, led through a set of ethics principles, and use technology to better support people using services and practitioners.

Shereen Hussein, Professor of Health and Social Care Policy at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in a session on the social services workforce highlighted employees' insecurity about their working conditions. "Staff insecurity exacerbates existing staff recruitment issues and the need for policy reforms to improve pay and job quality" explained Ms Hussein. How to ensure cost-effectiveness and not just cost saving was an issue raised by Martin Knapp, Professor of Social Policy, London School of Economics.

“

Ensuring a good quality of life for people using care services should be the outcome against which the return of investment in community care should be assessed.”

Martin Knapp, Professor of Social Policy,
London School of Economics.

Philosopher and theologian Francesc Torralba called for more recognition of the incalculable value of care, reflected in a new model of society in general and social services in particular. Other speakers highlighted the need for regulatory reform, transparency and the promotion of autonomy to protect and ensure the human rights of those using support services.

The conference also focused on the growing use of technology in community care. Giovanni Cabona, Councillor of the Italian National Council of Social Workers described how local social services in Italy developed innovative joint strategies, with the use of digital technologies to respond quickly to help local communities when the pandemic struck. Others spoke of the development of online access of benefits, e-vouchers, the extension of rental assistance through cloud enabled platforms to prevent evictions, remote monitoring, or the use of predictive data.

“

New technologies may also bring about ethical concerns. To ensure that the tools are created and utilised in a responsible manner, the end users must be included in the design process.”

Karin Christiansen, Senior Associate Professor and Leader of Research at the Research and Development Centre for Health and Welfare Technology in Denmark

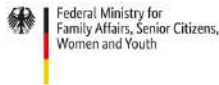
How we can ensure that social services professionals are involved in decision-making and human interaction is maintained are other crucial questions going forward.

Covid-19 put social care and social services, as well as carers and social workers, back on the political agenda. However, meaningful reform requires political commitment and appropriate investment – issues ESN will continue to highlight as Europe recovers from the pandemic.

30th European Social Services Conference

Hosted by: 
Hamburg

In cooperation with:



Confirmed partners to date:

IBM Watson Health™



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DIONA



BertelsmannStiftung



The European Social Services Conference

The largest annual public social welfare policy and practice forum in Europe.

As Europe emerges from Covid-19, what can we learn from the new and innovative, digital, agile, and remote ways of working developed during the pandemic so that social services continue to provide care and support for vulnerable people and communities?

How can social services professionals benefit from the EU budget and national resilience and recovery funds to modernise and reform social services?

Join us for the 30th anniversary of the European Social Services Conference to learn more about these new practices and discuss how we can use the new tools available to rethink the planning, provision, and evaluation of community-based social services, to ensure resilient and future-proof social services.

Interactive discussions and workshops will focus on 3 areas of change:

- Strategic changes in your organisation
- Investing in the workforce
- Improving the experience of people using social services

Visit essc-eu.org to find out more

The 30th European Social Services Conference will be hosted by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and organised with the support of the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

Join our Community of Partners

ESN continues to partner with the European Commission to deliver our annual policy programme.

Drawing on our expertise as the leading network for social services in Europe, ESN is looking to develop mutually beneficial long-term cooperation with organisations that will work with us to continue to pursue excellence and innovation in social services to better support vulnerable communities and those in need.

Key flagship activities:

- European Social Services Conference
- European Social Services Awards

Participate in our Innovation Zone

- Are you changing social services through the provision of IT and digital products and solutions for social services?
- Have you created tools for needs assessment, care planning, safeguarding or supporting professionals' mobility?
- Are you working with public authorities to design and implement new tools, services and platforms for social services management?

If you answer Yes to any of these questions, we want to hear from you. Get in touch with ESN's CEO alfonso.montero@esn-eu.org for more information.

The 2021 European Social Services Awards

Building Resilience in Social Services

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.

The 2021 edition paid tribute to the way in which social services responded to Covid-19 and ensured continuity and quality of care for vulnerable populations and those in need of support across Europe, while also looking ahead towards building resilient services and communities to be better prepared for future crises.

50 entries were submitted in five categories and shortlisted by a panel of experts, with winners selected following the judges vote and an online public vote. Unfortunately, because of the changing Covid-19 regulations in Belgium, the awards ceremony and announcement of the winners has been postponed until the beginning of 2022.

In partnership with:

IBM Watson Health™

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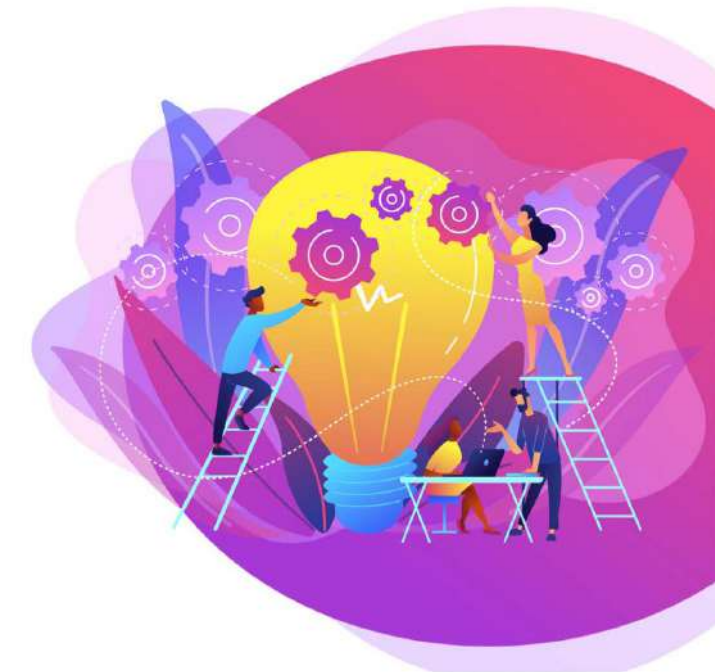
BUILDING RESILIENCE In Social Services



Shortlisted projects

Social Services Innovation Award

1. Herdanza Mater : AMICOS, SPAIN
2. The economic case for community care: ABC ITALIA, ITALY
3. LiberActive: LIBERTUS SERVICES, UK
4. Alternative Accommodation for Older People: MADRID CITY COUNCIL, SPAIN
5. Local Telecare Service: BARCELONA COUNTY COUNCIL, SPAIN
6. We Revive Villa Corsini: MUNICIPALITY OF ALBANO LAZIALE, ITALY



Outstanding Team Award

1. Socio-Educational Project Team: CHURRIANA DE LA VEGA, SPAIN
2. Centre for Integration Team: ZAGREB, CROATIA
3. Agenzija Support Community Services Team: MALTA
4. DOST Volunteering Program: AZERBAIJAN
5. Home-Based Therapeutic Services (HBTS) Parenting Team: MALTA
6. Social support network team for people in isolation and chronic conditions: FOGGIA, ITALY



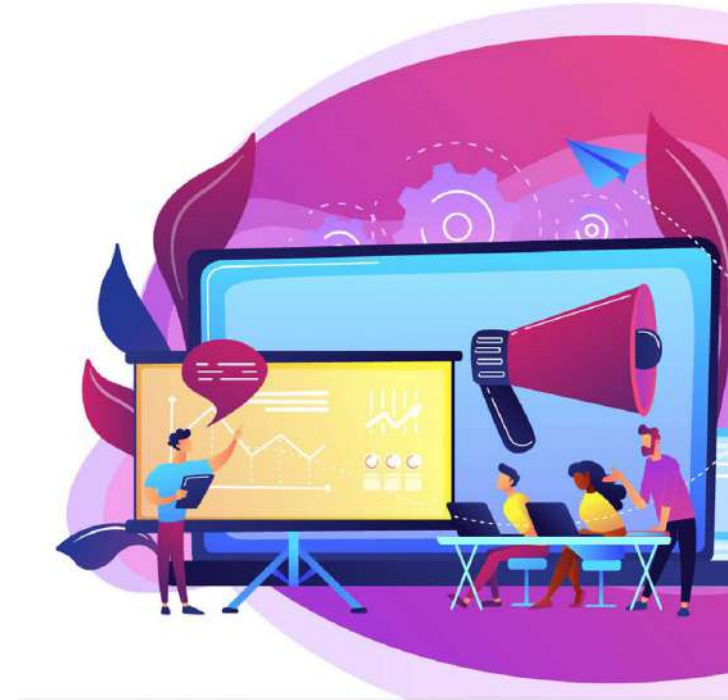
Collaborative Practice Award

1. Solidar Social: ADI HADEAN FOUNDATION WITH THE GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE & CHILD PROTECTION, BUCHAREST, ROMANIA
2. Support for vulnerable people in the context of Covid-19: ROMANIAN MINISTRY OF LABOUR & SOCIAL PROTECTION WITH THE ASSOC ASSOCIATION, ROMANIA
3. Social Services Resilience Challenge: CORUNA CITY COUNCIL, SPAIN
4. National Housing First Programme: IRELAND
5. The Bank: NORTHERN IRELAND, UNITED KINGDOM
6. Local coordinated network of services: TRENTO, ITALY



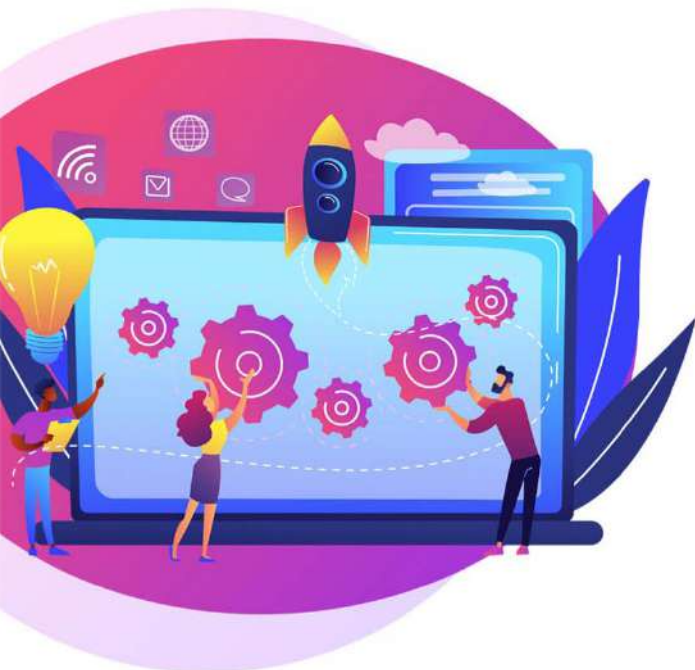
Research Project Award

1. Geolocation of social emergency situations during lockdown: MADRID CITY COUNCIL, SPAIN
2. Identification of Covid-19 Emerging Social Needs and Social Services Impact: CATALONIA, SPAIN
3. Social Work and the Covid-19 crisis: ITALY
4. Screening of Children and Adolescents' Social Vulnerabilities: BARCELONA CITY COUNCIL, SPAIN



Technology Tool Award

1. Smart Model for Sustainable Social Services: DOST, AZERBAIJAN
2. At a distance, but close to you: 6th DISTRICT, BUCHAREST, ROMANIA
3. FLAPP! Remote support service for young people leaving care: ISOCIAL FOUNDATION, SPAIN
4. MyLearning: SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL, UNITED KINGDOM
5. Virtual reality experience for older people and people with disabilities: GÄVLE COMMUNE, SWEDEN
6. Smart fall detection and monitoring system in social care centres: RIGA, LATVIA



An icon representing social services and technology, featuring stylized human figures, a gear, and a network of lines.

- **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**

Submissions for the 2022 European Social Services Awards open in May 2022.

Visit the ESSA website at essa-eu.org to find out how you can get involved.



OUR MEMBERS

ESN brings together 153 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.



Meet some of our newest members

Tusla Child and Family Agency, Ireland

The Child and Family Agency was established on 1st January 2014 and is responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children, providing a range of integrated help and support that a child and family might need, building on the families' strengths to provide the right response at the right time in the right way.

The Child and Family Agency has responsibility for Child Welfare and Protection Services, including family support services including care programme for children seeking international protection and aftercare services. They provide Family Resource Centres and associated national programmes; Early years (pre-school) Inspection Services; Home School Liaison; Services related to the psychological welfare of children; and services to tackle domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. They also have educational welfare responsibilities including school completion programmes.



ESN offers opportunities to engage with other European partner agencies to learn from their successes, to influence direction of European policy, and to benefit from European support for innovative initiatives. Knowing that our agency is not the only one experiencing an issue, sharing insights brings opportunities for solutions."

Gerard Brophy, Chief Social Worker,
Tusla Child and Family Agency, Ireland



Social Services Department, City of Stockholm, Sweden

The department promotes equality and quality of social services provided for the citizens of Stockholm, by the 13 city district councils. Responsible for the coordination and development of social services across the city, the department supports equal and accessible social services and interventions via the development of guidelines and policies; capacity-building and training; monitoring and supervision via inspections and a yearly report describing the state and development of social services in the city, as well as managing networks for managers and social workers and research and development.

The Social Services Department is also responsible for several thematic areas in social services such as mental health, young people, service quality, integration of migrants, domestic violence, and drug addiction.



Through our membership of ESN, we aim to exchange and share knowledge and best practice about social services with other European cities and stakeholders, thereby strengthening professionals and promoting quality in social services. We also believe that our membership will make it easier for us to stay informed on EU policy and make new contacts within the EU."

Veronica Wolgast Carstorp, Deputy Director
of the Social Services Department, City of
Stockholm, Sweden



iSocial Foundation, Spain

The iSocial Foundation promotes innovation in the social services sector, connecting public authorities, the third sector, universities and private companies to promote joint projects that contribute to the transformation of the sector. iSocial aims to be an advanced foundation in thinking and launching proposals for the improvement of social services, being well connected internationally and very reliable in the projects it develops. ISocial initiatives are aimed at transforming intervention models in social services; provoke systemic changes; adapt the role of social workers; and introduce technological innovations. The foundation has three areas of activity: Research, to generate knowledge; Lab, to co-create, promote or accompany innovation projects; and Campus, to train and disseminate knowledge among professionals in the sector.



“
International connection is a priority in iSocial’s mission. It’s not possible to innovate without a permanent look at the global challenges and changes in the sector and the promotion of joint initiatives between actors from different countries. For this reason, we were clear from the beginning that we should be part of ESN. Membership provides us with knowledge, contact with actors from all over Europe, activities to share innovative proposals, and the possibility of participating in joint projects.”

Tony Codina,
CEO & Co-Founder,
iSocial Foundation, Spain

Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute,
Jerusalem, Israel

The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute is Israel’s leading centre for applied social research and consulting, working in close partnership with an array of government ministries to address critical social issues among children and youth at risk, older people, people with disabilities, minorities, and other vulnerable populations. Their work deals with education, employment, health care, domestic violence, prostitution, criminal reform, and more. They use research to help inform policy, advise programming, and improve services for individuals, families, and communities, working to strengthen Israeli society by helping to improve decisions that impact the wellbeing of all.



“
Our Institute explores the same key issues featured in the work of ESN, including the focus of my team, which is the advancement and improvement of quality in social services. We see ESN membership as an opportunity for the exchange of information and practice knowledge and mutual learning, and an invitation for collaboration with a variety of organizations and stakeholders who have similar social challenges.”

Hilla Dolev, Senior Research Scholar & Team Leader,
Quality Assurance, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, Jerusalem, Israel

Become a member

Join our growing community

What we offer

- Access good practice and updates about European social policies
- Online library of good practices
- Monthly Newsletter and members' updates
- Online members' community
- Meetings with EU policy makers
- Contribute to EU policy consultations

Membership benefits

- Participation costs at ESN events for one delegate
- Discounted participation fees for a second delegate
- Discounted participation fees for the ESSC annual conference
- Discounted fees to attend the ESSA ceremony
- Discounted fees for ESN trainings

Membership Types

- **Core**

Public authorities and associations of social services directors in Europe
- **Core+**

Core benefits 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**

International public authorities, associations of professionals and social services directors, quality inspection and applied research organisations who share our mission and values.

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



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, Chair,
Deputy Director, City of Bruges,
Belgium



Rannveig Einarsdóttir,
Honorary Treasurer, Director of
family and children's services,
Hafnarfjörður, Iceland



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



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



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



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



Jukka Lindberg, Director of
Health & Social Care, Hame
Region, Finland

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 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 European Commission. ESN is a partner in three social innovation projects funded by the EaSI strand of European funding. 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. ESN also advises public authorities on policy reform. Finally, ESN's growing Network of members contribute to its sustainability.

26%

Event Partnerships &
Delegate Contributions

17%

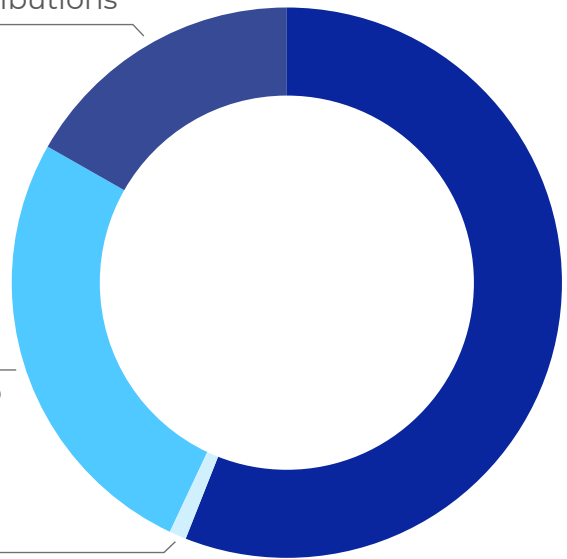
Membership

1%

Advisory

56%

EU Grant and
Projects



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.

Meet the Secretariat



ALFONSO LARA-MONTERO

Chief Executive Officer



ALVARO SANCHEZ

Finance and HR Manager



ELONA BOKSHI

Policy Manager



ROSEMARY HINDLE

Communications Manager



MARTIN LICHTÉ

Policy Officer



THOMAS STEVENS

Communications Officer



TANJA SHEIKHI

Membership and Operations Officer



REBECA MADRUGA

Project Manager



FRANCESCO CAPUANI

Development Coordinator



CAROLYN GILL

Event Producer



CATALINA MARIAN

Executive and Business Support Officer



VICTOR DE VRIES

Junior Policy Officer



ANNA YAGUE

Membership and Operations Assistant



MAGDALENA KOLCZYNSKA

Junior Policy Officer

European Social Network

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