

# Building Resilience In Social Services

European Social Services Awards  
2021



## **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 by exchanging knowledge and expertise.

## **Acknowledgements**

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# About the Awards

## The European Social Services Awards

The European Social Services Awards (ESSA), led by the European Social Network (ESN), recognise innovation and excellence in social services in Europe, shining a spotlight on successful new approaches and the extraordinary ongoing work done by public social services managers, funders, planners and providers.

### The Awards aim to:

- identify and promote **best practice** in social services;
- recognise **excellent work** done in the field;
- **encourage peers** to work with and support each other in improving their practice;
- **promote innovation** in social services in Europe.

The ESSA are pioneers in bringing people from across Europe to celebrate social services' achievements and the passion and dedication of those who work in social services to make a difference for the most vulnerable in our societies.

The entries are submitted in the **five categories**, which highlight different aspects of social services work:

### **Social Service Innovation**

Practices that show initiative in creating, implementing or promoting a new approach to delivering social services in the community.

### **Outstanding Team**

Groups of people who have made an outstanding contribution to the provision of social services or social care in the community.

### **Collaborative Practice**

As a social services network, ESN believes strongly in the importance and value of collaboration between organisations and sectors. This award recognises such collaborations and is jointly awarded to organisations or teams who have collaborated across agencies and sectors.

### **Technology Tool**

This award recognises the tools' contribution to help decision-makers and professionals shape and improve the services they provide or how technology and IT can help deliver specific policies and services.

### **Research Project**

Excellence in social services practice and research are mutually dependent. The research project award recognises a research team's contribution that created knowledge in community care/community social services in a range of populations.

Award-winners are selected in a two-step process, combining an expert panel's selection with an online community vote.

In line with ESN's ethos of promoting peer relationships and a social service community, the final decision on the headline award, the **ESN Excellence in Social Services Award**, is made by all those gathered at the annual awards ceremony from across the social service community. The Excellence Award recognises a stand-out project or team working in the area of the annual theme.

## **Excellence**

Public social services are the cornerstone of social welfare systems. We have been working for many years studying and proposing ways in which public authorities may invest in quality social services. Thematic reports on [Contracting for Quality](#), [Putting Quality First](#), [Investing in Children's Services](#), [Towards more independent lives for people with disabilities](#) underscore specific quality principles and practice for older people, children and disability's services. [Striving for Quality](#) proposes to review the EU framework for quality in social services to integrate a Care Guarantee for All as well as newly added principles related to transparency and governance, service commissioning, regulation, data and technology, and the workforce.



# Foreword

Being part of the Awards Ceremony as a member of the selection panel and participant opened my eyes, again, to the obvious: the world of social work is a very vast world, evidently a difficult and complicated profession. However, the amount of creativity and entrepreneurship among social workers is simply amazing.

From simple realistic ideas coupled with a good dose of determination, dozens of awesome projects were born. I really had hard time with the shortlisting exercise, and I would imagine fellow selection panel members experienced the same challenge! All in all, it was a positive experience to be part of this yearly venture of ESN.

Back in my office, I have briefed the International Social Service Secretariat staff of my time with ESN's CEO, Alfonso Lara Montero, and team as well as my participation at the ESSA. Being part of the ESSA, I have rediscovered ESN and its outreach and felt that both our organisations could explore avenues of cooperation.

Jean Ayoub  
Secretary General  
International Social Service

# ESSA 2021 Judges



**Christian Fillet**  
ESN Chair and Director  
in Bruges



**Delphine Chilesse - Lemerinier**  
Head of EU Affairs,  
Edenred



**Hector Upegui**  
Worldwide Market Dev  
Executive & Chief Health  
Officer, GHHS - International  
IBM Watson Health



**Cornelia Walther**  
Creator POZER Space,  
Author and Advocate



**Enrique Delamónica**  
Senior Adviser Statistics  
and Monitoring, UNICEF



**Jean Ayoub**  
Secretary General of  
The International Social  
Service (ISS)



**Dorothy Adams**  
Former Chief Executive  
Officer, Social Well-Being  
Agency, New Zealand and  
seconded at the OCDE



**Andrzej Klimczuk**  
Assistant Professor at  
the Warsaw School of  
Economics, Poland



**Manuel Torres**  
Managing Director  
Health and Public  
Service Practice,  
Accenture



**Nicole Valentine**  
Social Determinants of  
Health and Equity Technical  
Officer, World Health  
Organization (WHO)



**Johannes Schädler**  
Professor, Coordinator of  
Centre for Planning and  
Evaluation of Social Services,  
ZPE, university of Siegen



**Kenichi Hirose**  
Senior Social Protection  
Specialist, International  
Labour Organisation Office  
for Eastern Europe



**Lucia Dal Negro**  
Co-founder & CEO, De-  
LAB-Inclusive Business  
& Social Innovation



**Monika Chaba**  
Policy Officer, Directorate-  
General for Employment,  
Social Affairs and Inclusion,  
European Commission

# Building Resilience

Each year, the European Social Services Awards are held under a social service practice theme. In 2021 the theme was **Building Resilience in Social Services**.

During the pandemic, all populations have been affected, but in particular children, vulnerable families like those where parents are in unstable or low paid jobs, the homeless, and older adults, especially those living in residential facilities, all of them populations with whom social services work. The pandemic brought to light the essential role social services play in improving people's lives as well as the urgent need to build more resilient services and communities.

While some challenges emerged as a direct consequence of this crisis, others related to social needs that were not adequately met prior to the crisis worsened, such as the lack of adequate housing and quality long-term care. In many European countries, years of under-investment before the pandemic meant that the social services sector struggled to meet the growing demand for support while ensuring the quality, accessibility, and continuity of services.

The 2021 Awards aimed to recognise the central role of public social services in responding to the Covid emergency and the post-pandemic recovery, while highlighting the need to strengthen public social services to improve their preparedness for future crises. The Awards also honoured efforts to develop innovative and resilient models of care and support for all population groups: children and youth, families, adults with complex needs, older people, informal and formal carers.

The 2021 winners were announced in a ceremony in Brussels on 1 April 2022.



“

*These awards are the tool to bring social services together with new tools, technology and very innovative ideas.*

”

Christian Fillet, ESN Chair

Many thanks to our partners



# ESSA 2021 Winners Their Stories

“ I believe the world needs hope more than ever. For me, the projects that have been submitted for these awards represent this hope. ”

Arancha Martínez, CEO & Co-founder ComGo, and Winner of the EU Women Innovators Award 2020



# Excellence Award Winner

Aġenzija Support Community Services Team



## **Why did you apply for the European Social Services Awards 2021 and how do you feel about this recognition and experience?**

Aġenzija Support is the Maltese national Agency that provides professional and innovative services to enhance the quality of life of persons with disabilities. Its vision is to be the leader in guiding the Maltese community, which promotes ability rather than disability. Our Agency has contributed in a number of projects in collaboration with other European countries and thus has a lot to offer. Applying for these awards is an opportunity that could not be missed as its recognition and experience transmit energy and motivation to continue providing professional services to our service users. Being recognised and short-listed amongst so many valid and effective projects is an honour and it provides us and our service users with more opportunities for networking, sharing best practices and experiences to continue maintaining the quality of our services.

## **What is the added value of being part of a European Network for your organization? Why is it important to share practices and projects with other actors from all over Europe?**

Being recognised nationally and on a European level is very encouraging and allows us to continue collaborating and sharing knowledge and experience in the disability sector. In addition, being part of the European Social Network is a tool for the Agency to continue growing and evolving to continue providing innovative social services. Such collaborations and exposure presents us with the possibility of building connections with other service providers, share research ideas and findings about current social welfare challenges, implement modern techniques in service provision and ensure that our programmes are in line with emerging international standards that support and empower our service users. This international exposure also gives added assurance to our service users that the standard

of our services is indeed high and recognised on an international level. Such opportunities even served for our services to be chosen as models for other countries, and therefore we believe that we have a lot to offer.

### **What makes your project stand out?**

Our submitted project, the Community Services Team provides assistance to persons with disabilities within their homes. Persons eligible for the service are persons with disabilities who have other complex social issues or are at risk of developing such issues. While they are assisted through the Agency's social work team, the community team assists them with the necessary tools, such as daily living skills, to continue living independently in the community. The service promotes independence and active participation in their communities while moving away from institutional care.

We focus on abilities and the possibility of gaining new skills rather than doing things for them.

### **How does your project build resilience?**

Our Agency strives to build evidence-based services. As a result, the Community Services Team has developed over this last year during

which operations were evaluated to promote good quality of life for people with disabilities going through major social issues. In addition, it looked into best practices of existing community services to promote independence and equality for persons with disabilities.

Apart from focusing only on service users, the team has looked into the needs of Support Workers who are in direct contact with service users. Services should continuously evolve and change according to the needs of service users. The Covid-19 pandemic brought about challenges and new situations which the team met through flexibility in service provision, adapting to the new needs particularly emergency situations to assist or increase the assistance to families of persons with disabilities during a time when other services were restricted or stopped due to the pandemic. Such challenges strengthened the service and brought to the surface new and sustainable alternative ways of developing and delivering community-based programmes and services.

*Ruth Rose Sciberras*  
Chief Executive Officer  
Agenzia Support



# Innovation Award Winner

Alternative Accommodation for  
Older People to help them overcome loneliness



## **Why did you apply for the European Social Services Awards 2021 and how do you feel about this recognition and experience?**

For Madrid City Council, innovation and continued success in the excellence of social services are a constant part of daily planning of our programmes and services.

Applying for the European Social Services Awards 2021 gave us the opportunity to make this project visible and to share our experience with other cities in Europe. In our commitment to establish synergies in the field of social innovation, receiving this Award has been an invaluable honour.

Innovation is a fundamental tool in times of crisis, and we really feel that way considering the diversity of complex social situations that we had to deal with as a result of the pandemic. In addition, we wanted to obtain recognition for the various social and community agents involved in our project, as they designed and executed these actions in complex and difficult times.

So, for us, this Award is, without doubt, a stimulus to continue implementing social innovation actions.

## **What is the added value of being part of a European Network for your organization? Why is it important to share practices and projects with other actors from all over Europe?**

Being part of the European Social Network, undoubtedly brings recognition and visibility to Madrid City Council, as a public administration in the management of social services. It is also a genuine opportunity to get to know other projects carried out throughout Europe and discover good and innovative practices.

Generating synergies with other organisations in the European Union and being able to learn about their projects places us in a privileged position for collaborative learning, and that drives us to continue implementing social innovation processes in our organization.





At the local level, we must be prepared to be creative, to share, to learn and to innovate, and also to be resilient in the face of social emergency circumstances that may arise and develop in our cities.

Being part of the European Social Network means nourishing ourselves with a diversity of innovative projects that may improve the quality of social services and find creative responses to people's emerging needs.

### What makes your project stand out?

Due to COVID-19, we were challenged to care for older people who in a few days had lost family members, or even caregivers, affecting their daily activities.

A tourist apartment block was transformed into alternative accommodation for 75 older people who were living in complex situations and facing unexpected loneliness. An interdisciplinary team provided them with social and psychological support, as well as health care.

The project, from a systemic approach to quality and innovation, brought together several areas of municipal health and social services, placing the person at the centre

of all care processes. All the professionals involved from each of the services provided interdisciplinary care tailored to each user's social and health needs, to help them deal with their new situation and recover their equilibrium. People greatly appreciated being able to go through a moment of such vulnerability in a safe and dignified environment.

### How does your project build resilience?

We all experienced a moment of great uncertainty at the beginning of the pandemic. Older people were hit the hardest. Madrid City Council, through this project, valued the capacities and potential of the social agents involved, as well as our belief in the strengths of older people. Based on this premise, the accommodation facility was a place to compensate for the traumatic social and health loss, which we are still experiencing today.

*Juan Carlos Pérez Aguilar*  
General Director of Older People  
Madrid City Council

# Outstanding Team Award **Winner**

Socio-Educational Project Team



**Why did you choose to apply for the European Social Services Awards 2021, and how do you feel about this recognition and experience?**

After creating and developing the socio-educational project, we saw that it was an initiative that could have an impact on the lives of the young participants and a subsequent reflection in their inclusion in the educational centre and society.

Knowing the call for the Awards, we thought that our idea could fit perfectly into the good practices of social services that are carried out in Europe. We decided to present the project with great enthusiasm, but we were aware that it was very difficult to win because of the high quality of the competing countries. We are grateful and excited for this recognition. We have come much further than we ever imagined.

**Why is it important to share practice and projects with other organisations across Europe?**

It was very exciting to live such a special moment accompanied by representatives of nations from all over Europe and people working on such great projects. It is a privilege to be able to exchange experiences at this level and learn other ways of working, with very different points of view, adapted to the reality of each of the countries.

Joining a European Network is a very important leap that gives value to everything we have achieved with a lot of work and the involvement of a great team in which each piece is fundamental. We want to continue growing and learning from the best. Let's take advantage of this great opportunity.

## What makes your project stand out?

Our socio-educational project provides a very original vision of the responses given to disciplinary problems in the educational field. The key is to involve civil society, in this case the students themselves and their families, educational centres, nursing homes and associations, and work together with social services professionals. It is the best example of how to achieve great results without many resources.

We were fortunate to receive another award from the regional government for this same project, which showed us that we were doing a good job. Currently other local entities are developing similar programmes based on our socio-educational project. The most rewarding thing about all this effort is the result, that students are aware of what their problem is and how they can solve it by contributing positive things where they live.

## How does your project build resilience?

The young people who have been part of the project are students who have been expelled from institutional care for different reasons. After an analysis and the work of the social services team (a social integrator, a social educator, a clinical psychologist and a coordinator), we go to the root of the problem by proposing different social collaboration activities.

In most cases, we have managed to turn the situation around and get students to take the first step to abandon certain attitudes that lead to problems such as lack of trust and impulse control, and violence. The goal is to provide useful tools to get up and move on, always with the support of their families. The project does not end when the expulsion period ends. Young people continue receiving support from a social educator from the municipal social services.

*Antonio Luis Rodríguez García  
Town Councillor for Social Services,  
Churriana de la Vega*





# Collaborative Practice Award **Winner**

National Housing First Programme



## **Why did you choose to apply for the European Social Services Awards 2021, and how do you feel about this recognition and experience?**

The decision to apply for the ESSA 2021 was made across the housing and health systems in Ireland to celebrate the progress made on implementation of the model, which has reached a national level. It's an approach to solving long-term homelessness which has really captured the interest of the public services and NGOs delivering the model. The ESSA provided a real opportunity for everyone who has been involved in integrating these supports and reforming existing services, to reflect and celebrate the progress made. Most of the time we rightly focus on what's not working so that we can improve services. The ESSA provides an opportunity to recognise the many frontline staff and senior managers that have driven this innovation.

## **What is the added value of being part of a European Network for your organisation? Why is it important to share practice and projects with other actors across Europe?**

Genio's involvement with the ESN has enabled us to tap into the cutting-edge discussions about public service innovation and methodologies for enhancing co-production in service delivery. Supporting innovation with complex, public systems can be challenging work. It is important to have a network of peers with expertise across service areas that we can discuss implementation challenges with.

## **What makes your project stand out?**

The collaboration of services and the scaling of the model across every Local Authority area of the Irish housing system and every region of the Health Service Executive makes Ireland's Housing First programme unique.

The founder of the Housing First model, Dr Sam Tsemberis has been involved in adapting the model as part of the national rollout. In response to the announcement of the ESN award on social media he responded “IRELAND’s National Housing First program is comprised of a unique collaboration between Housing & Health ministries, the national housing agency, and a cadre of NGO’s and can serve as a model for other EU nations. Congratulations! Well deserved!”

### **How does your project build resilience?**

We have heard from the external evaluation and the programme action research that the programme has also had knock-on effects in terms of demonstrating that existing service provision can adopt new innovations and

increase client choice within these models. The integration of service responses across government departments illustrates that large, complex systems can be shaped by the preferences and capacities of those using them. Building client choice into service design and implementation is one of the main reason this model has been so successful to date.

*John Healy*  
*Deputy Executive Director*  
*Genio*



# Research Project Award **Winner**

Social Work and the Covid-19 Crisis



## **Why did you choose to apply for the European Social Services Awards 2021?**

We chose to apply for the European Social Services Awards 2021 because we believe it's very important to make the work done by professional Italian Social Workers visible also through international events such as those organised by ESN. We are proud of our award in the research section! It is the analysis and communication tool of our community, and we are trying to encourage its use among professionals. Participation in the ESSA was exciting and involved the entire professional community through online voting.

## **Why is it important to share practice and projects with other organisations across Europe?**

For years, the National Council of Social Workers (CNOAS) has had an international perspective on the profession as a goal.

Being part of ESN allows professionals with an international vision to work together as the problems they face are interconnected globally. ESN membership allows us to deal with European Social Services professionals and institutions on current topics common to all nations. It also allows us to make the voice of professionals heard by the European Commission, with whom ESN collaborates to promote the wellbeing of European populations.

Sharing practices and projects allows us to optimise the efforts of social services by increasing their knowledge and performance by improving their strive for equality.

## **What makes your project stand out?**

This research was guided by a participatory approach. The survey reached 20,000 social

workers, and in the process of data analysis, we involved a group of 30 experts creating six virtual communities working together to co-build new knowledge. The aim was to gather knowledge from front line professionals and turn it into substantial improvements in welfare structures and related social policies, as well as new conceptualisation useful to inform social work practice in the context of emergency.

### How does your project build resilience?

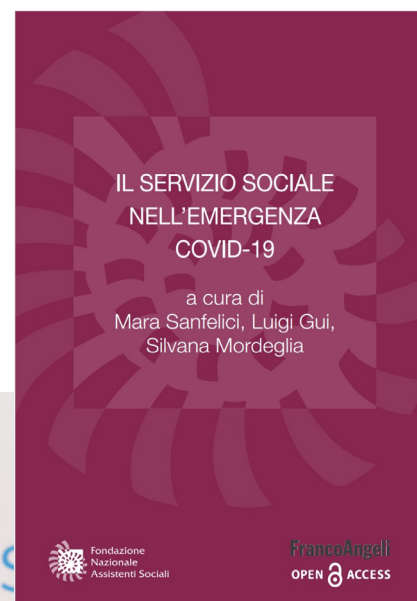
The discoveries, the challenges, the experiments, and the lessons that emerged from our collective workshop that brought together citizens, professionals, and institutions, have been and are useful in understanding how to deal with unpredictable situations and new emergencies. The study that we conducted with this research has strengthened the belief that scrupulously

analysing the events and responses adopted by applying the typical methodologies of Social Work allows us to understand how to improve professional practice. This awareness enables us to put the concept of resilience into practice.

We are already applying it to guide the intervention with the new emergency that involves refugees from Ukraine.

*Silvana Mordegli*  
President  
National Foundation of Social Workers

*Giovanni Cabona*  
Councilor  
National Council of Social Workers





# Technology Tools Award **Winner**

DOST: Smart Model for Sustainable Social Services



## Why did you choose to apply for the European Social Services Awards 2021?

The ESSA recognises the European Social Network's outstanding performance in the management, planning and delivery of public social services across Europe. The categories of the Awards fully reflect the necessary conditions for the establishment of social services. The approaches promoted by the European Social Network - human rights, dignity, equality, innovative technologies, and transparency - are in line with DOST values and principles. To be recognised, to gain experience and to grow at the international environment where European values prevail, and thus to contribute to the development of social services in the world is one of our important missions.

## Why is it important to share practice and projects with other organisations across Europe?

An organization thrives when knowledge and experience are shared, discussed and listened to, and new solutions are found. The experience and project exchange opportunities offered by the European Social Network provide an opportunity to get acquainted with completely new approaches, new ideas and the experience of overcoming obstacles. It will greatly help to build social services based on the principle of universality set by DOST.



### What makes your project stand out?

In just three years, DOST has established an effective intra-system and extra-system coordination mechanism using first "one window" and then a hybrid model that combines "one window" and "one door" platforms. In parallel with the implementation of technology tools in social innovations, the organisation has formed an outstanding team, increased its number of services to 154 and expanded its coverage to 20% of the country population. As a result, waiting lists and service periods for citizens were reduced by 25% and 12%, and citizen satisfaction increased to 98,2%.

### How does your project build resilience?

The sustainability of the project is ensured by the social reforms carried out in Azerbaijan, by Presidential decrees that approved the Concept, Charter and List of Services covered by DOST by 2025, support by the First Lady and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, well-arranged staff selection and database development, approved internal procedures, certified services, transparency, team of volunteers and, finally, the satisfaction and high expectations of the population from the DOST model.

*Farid Mammadov  
Chairman of the Board  
DOST Agency*

# ESSA 2021 Finalist Projects

“

*It is not about the prize, it is about the journey. How people are engaging in creating these possibilities, in creating these ideas and being engaged in doing them is a great repository of knowledge for all the community involved.*

”

Héctor Upegui, Worldwide Market Development Executive  
IBM Watson Health



# Innovation Award Nominees

## Herdanza Mater, Spain

With this project, the association AMICOS promotes the social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities through volunteering activities in environmental protection and heritage preservation. Amicos collaborates with the local fishermen communities, a natural park, local companies and schools to implement the activities, which are led by people with disabilities. Herdanza Mater reaches up to 100,000 people in the north-western region of Galicia, Spain, and intends to scale up to reach up to three million people

## The economic case for community care – The ‘Sardinia Model’, Italy

With this programme, ABC Italia promotes home services for people with disabilities and their families, customised and co-produced with local services to prevent placements in institutions. The programme involves the design of individualised support programmes for more than 40,000 people per year. In times of Covid it has proved successful in drastically lowering the rate of institutionalisation, improving social and health services that create social and economic development based on personalised and co-produced interventions for vulnerable populations.

## LiberActive, United Kingdom

Libertus Services replaced a conventional day service for 110 weekly placements for older people at very short notice to respond to the emergency lockdown due to the pandemic. Older vulnerable adults using the service are provided with support, training and electronic enabled devices to access social group activities. LiberActive group activities reduce social isolation, as participants take part in a wide range of stimulating and enjoyable activities while remaining in contact with the providers and with their peers.

## Alternative accommodation for older people to help them overcome loneliness, Spain

This project by Madrid City Council supported older people in social isolation to cover their health, physical, and psycho-social needs during the Covid-19 lockdown, when usual services had to stop during the Covid-19 lockdown. Housing facilities were provided for older people in need, who could not return immediately to their homes because of their weakened physical and emotional circumstances. Fifty people were serviced by a multidisciplinary team of professionals. The evaluation showed that people felt accompanied and cared for according to their personal needs.



## Local Telecare Service, Spain

The Local Telecare Service of Barcelona County Council is a preventive and person-centred service that offers professional support 24 hours a day, every day of the year. It is aimed at people who may be at risk due to age, loneliness, social isolation, health, frailty, disability or dependency reasons. On the one hand, the telecare service attends emergency situations through their inter-administrative collaboration and coordination with community-based services. On the other hand, it provides home visits, personalised proactive and follow-up calls. Currently, the service has started a process of digitisation for further adaptation and providing digital care programmes that move towards a more predictive service.

## We revive Villa Corsini, Italy

Villa Corsini, a green area rich in history, has long been in a state of neglect. The municipality of Albano Laziale in Italy started a project to promote its regeneration while at the same time activating a social inclusion programme for people with mental health, learning and physical disabilities. The participants, who regularly visit a day centre, volunteered to bring back the historical and artistic heritage of Villa Corsini. Volunteers are stimulated through environmental education initiatives and provided with a rehabilitation and resilient pathway from vulnerability and isolation to social inclusion.

### Innovation

At ESN we are constantly promoting innovative ways of finding new solutions to common social problems. We run a peer programme where members interested in implementing a service back home are supported in a learning and implementation exchange with peers in other countries. We gather innovative practice through our activities assessed through a template and populate an [online practice library](#). We bring our members together to share innovations in social services, such as [inclusive activation](#) to support the furthest to reach into the labour market, or co-production in service planning, delivery, and evaluation. By promoting the capacity of social services at local level to innovate, we contribute to European level objectives from the bottom-up.



# Outstanding Team Award Nominees

## Socio-Educational Project Team, Spain

Social services in Churriana de la Vega in Granada, Spain, realised that young people who were expelled from school spent their time at home alone not necessarily benefitting from this time of reflection. In the meantime, the Council realised that there was a relational and interactional gap between young people and the older generation in the town. Therefore, they set up a mixed team of psychologists, community and social workers to develop joint activities for secondary school students expelled from school and older people in local day and older people's centres. Thanks to this initiative, younger people's tolerance and empathy towards older people has greatly improved and there has been an improvement in social cohesion within the local community.

## Centre for Integration Team, Croatia

The team of the City Office for Social Protection and Persons with Disabilities of the City of Zagreb has been developing and implementing initiatives such as the Re-Start project and the centre for integration for the past 10 years to promote employment for a number of populations. The City of Zagreb started the Re-Start project to foster the social inclusion of victims of domestic violence (especially the elderly), homeless people and people with addictions (especially veterans) through their centre for integration. The overall goal of the project is to improve access to sustainable, affordable and high-quality additional services for these populations. The project is implemented in partnership with other third sector organisations, social and health support services.

## Aġenzija Support Community Services Team, Malta

The team at Aġenzija Support Community Services provides personalised support for people with disabilities in Malta through Individualised Care Plans (ISP). These plans are personalised so that additional social problems beyond disability are taken into account. Through skills sessions such as cooking, budget management, personal care, housekeeping and shopping, clients are empowered to participate in day-to-day activities independently, and become active participants in the community. In 2020, 137 persons with disabilities benefited directly from this service, consisting of 600 service hours per week.

## DOST Team of Volunteers, Azerbaijan

DOST Volunteering Program (DVP) is an innovative approach in the field of communication and provision of social services. DVP promotes within DOST (Agency for Social Protection in Azerbaijan) volunteering opportunities provided by the state in the field of social protection. DVP plays a crucial role in the shift of citizen-institutional relations from a traditional-administrative management model to a multilateral universal service one. During the Covid-19 crisis, DVP provided core frontline operational support to re-shift DOST activities as required during the lockdown periods.

## Home-Based Therapeutic Services (HBTS) Parenting Team, Malta

The HBTS Parenting Team addresses a service gap for families in distress across Malta. The aim of the programme is to keep families together by preventing the escalation of cases to child protection services, preventing placements outside the family, and supporting the return of children who had been placed in external care. The team consists of professionals from multiple backgrounds, who with limited resources provide holistic care and comes up with innovative solutions. Notes are shared to maximise the transfer of knowledge in the team. The parenting programmes are offered in a group format in residential homes, prisons, or community resource centres, but also individually at home.

## Social support network team for people in isolation and chronic conditions, Italy

With this team, the Health Authority of the Province of Foggia started a reorganisation of social and health support through a shared, multi-professional and cross-cutting working methodology within social and health care systems. Being the second largest province in Italy, the territory of Foggia presents exceptional difficulties on assessing health services which have worsened during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a response, health and social care teams have coordinated to define a new intervention model, supported by a computerised social and health record as a model for information sharing, coordinated interventions, removing gaps and overlaps, promoting holistic care, identifying external resources and the appropriateness of actions. This project started targeting people in vulnerable situations and isolation due to Covid-19, but its positive results have led to its expansion to also include people with chronic conditions. Watch the video about the project [here](#)

### Outstanding Team

ESN undertook one of the very few international studies on the composition of the social services workforce. Investing in the social services workforce describes similarities and differences between the social services workforce of several European countries and reviews qualifications and skills, recruitment and retention, workforce mobility and workforce planning and management. Among others, ESN recommends the European Commission and national authorities to advance towards mutual recognition of qualifications and joint training. This message is underlined in our response to the Commission's Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights, where we propose a European social care workforce strategy.



# Collaborative Practice Award Nominees

## Solidar Social, Romania

'Solidar Social' was initiated by Adi Hadean Foundation with the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection of the 6th District of Bucharest alongside dozens of volunteer chefs who prepared daily warm meals for vulnerable people during the Covid-19 pandemic. This initiative aimed to create a model of humanitarian response in an emergency to be scalable to regional and national levels. Since the start of the project, more than 100 volunteers and 60 professionals coordinated to provide warm meals and emotional support to over 250 beneficiaries daily.

## Support for vulnerable people in the context of Covid-19 pandemic, Romania

The Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in partnership with the ASSOC association launched this project in May 2020 aiming to meet the needs of people suffering loneliness and isolation in poorer communities in Romania. The initiative's objective is to identify through Mobile Social Support Units people in need who did not have their economic, physical, emotional and social support needs covered during the Covid-19 pandemic. The project involves over 1,000 social and community workers, call centres operators, NGOs and public administrations. It represents an unprecedented example of efficiency reached through coordinating all agents involved and managing interventions according to the specific needs of each person. The results have informed national government for an improvement on how the needs of these vulnerable populations are addressed.

## Social Services Resilience Challenge, Spain

Coruña City Council in the north-western Spanish region of Galicia has been implementing the Resilience Challenge initiative to maintain and reinforce coordination between public, private and third sector stakeholders during the social emergency brought about by the pandemic. Coruña City Council has been establishing new coordination protocols and formalising innovative practice, in a collaborative way, though advice provided by the Local Council for Social Inclusion. The improvement of collaboration at community level has led to progress in the assessment, monitoring and provision of support for people who need social services.

## National Housing First Programme, Ireland

Housing First (HF) is an internationally recognised, evidence-based model for individuals who are long-term homeless with complex needs. The HF model consists of 3 components; 1. permanent, affordable housing; 2. mobile case management and treatment services; 3. a philosophy based on client's choice and recovery. Ireland's National HF Programme provides an opportunity for all stakeholders in the homeless sector to take a new approach to housing treatment and support services in a planned and integrated way. This person-centred approach has achieved until now an 87% effectiveness rate in terms of tenancy maintenance.

## The Bank' – Supported living housing project, Ireland

Woodstock Bank is a collaborative supported living project for people with significant mental illness in Belfast, Northern Ireland. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a rise in service users experiencing delayed discharge in acute inpatient mental health hospitals due to the lack of suitable supported accommodation in the community, which causes a detrimental impact on the recovery journey and creates a bottleneck in mental health hospitals. The project has successfully provided a housing solution to 8 service users, providing daily support, and developing a new model of 'step-down facility' while promoting independence for users. The successful results have allowed the continuity and potential scalability of the project.

## Local coordinated network of services, Italy

The Department of Health and Social Policies of the Province of Trento in Italy developed this initiative at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic to provide concrete help to the most vulnerable people. A Call Centre collected the needs of citizens and coordinated a network consisting of local authorities, volunteers, psychologists and health and social services professionals, to offer home-shopping services and remote psychological and relational support, as well as monitoring and following-up with people in need of support. The project has been improved through the different phases of the pandemic, reaching a potential response capacity of up to 10,000 families.

### Collaboration

The ways in which social services provide integrated support with other public services, namely education, employment and health has been an area of work at ESN for years. Our publication Integrated Social Services in Europe is a review of literature and a 44-practice assessment that helped us to come up with key messages for policy-makers and practitioners. Collaborative forms of social service delivery may be implemented in various forms, such as case management and multidisciplinary teams consisting of professionals from different sectors. Examples of service cooperation and integration are also identified and discussed in the framework of our working group on integrated care and support.



# Research Project Award Nominees

## Geolocation of social emergency situations during lockdown, Spain

Madrid city council implemented data collection and database cross-cutting to map out the social needs of the population during the Covid-19 lockdowns, allowing an improvement in the interventions carried out by the municipality. Being the first systematic geolocation effort of social emergency situations carried out in the city, the maps created with the collated geographic information allowed the council to have precise information related to each household, to adjust the thresholds to access support to be more aligned with their specific needs, ensuring quicker responses and prioritising higher vulnerability profiles.

## INSESS-COVID-19: Identification of Emerging Social Needs as consequence of the COVID19 and effect on the Social Services of the territory, Spain

A prospective study from an innovative approach based on AI and rapid data collection mechanisms to know and foresee the emerging vulnerabilities of the population during the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects in the territory in the 105 areas of Social Services of Catalonia. INSESS-COVID19 combines data science, knowledge management and AI to create a technological solution that gets direct data from citizens, extracts relevant decisional knowledge from it, and generates automatic final reports in very few hours, thus providing support elements for a better decision making, strategic definition, efficiency of resources and policy making in Social Services.

## Social Work and the Covid-19 crisis, Italy

By the end of March 2020, the National Council of Social Workers, the National Foundation of Social Workers and 14 out of 20 Regional Councils of Social Work in Italy joined forces to bring together social workers and researchers to gather knowledge from front line professionals and turn it into improvements in welfare structures and related social policies. The research was based on a survey answered by 20,000 social workers, a group of 30 experts, and 6 virtual communities to analyse data and create the knowledge that not only has helped to better understand the effects of Covid-19 but also to lead towards the necessary change for a more coherent, effective and community-based social welfare system.

## Screening of Children and Adolescents' Social Vulnerabilities, Spain

Initiative led by Barcelona City Council that aims to develop a screening system to speed up the identification of children and adolescents who are at risk or already suffer from social vulnerabilities and to implement specific actions to address them. The first phase of the project has generated a shared framework allowing coordinated actions among all agents involved. A second phase aims to develop a screening system and pilot it to identify the adequate indicators. It is expected that the final product will lead to a preventive strategy to identify children and adolescents in situations that prevent them from reaching their full potential and contribute to related policy-making.

## Research

ESN is very much aware of the importance of reinforcing links between research, policy, and practice. Several of our members are applied research centres who run studies for and advise public authorities. We work with researchers in the formulation of questionnaires and research questions for our activities. Over the years, we have promoted a better understanding of new methodologies such as evidence-based practice to innovate in social services. Our [toolkit Evidence-based social services](#) proposes questions that social services professionals may ask themselves when they are planning and evaluating social services.





# Technology Tool Award Nominees

## DOST: smart model for sustainable social services, Azerbaijan

With five centres, covering eleven districts of Baku city and other regions in the country, DOST is providing a centralised electronic system which ensures direct, operational, transparent and easy access to social services, and promotes universal and sustainable services provision., DOST is advancing digitalisation of service provision, automation of processes and decrease of human factor involvement, while ensuring a universal and coordinated service access based on people's needs. By the end of 2023, it aims to replicate the project and reach each person in need of social protection within the country.

## At a distance, but close to you, Romania

This local initiative from the 6th District of Bucharest has offered continuity to therapeutic services for children with mental disorders during the Covid-19 pandemic through an online tool that also supports parents or legal representatives. A team of specialists (psychologists, educators and 3C therapists) has innovatively put into practice individualised intervention plans with concrete objectives and activities depending on the specific situation of each child. Every intervention plan was designed so that it could be implemented at home and according to Covid-19 restrictions. Besides ensuring continuity, this project has prevented regression of progress, promoted the role of the family and strengthened relations between children, parents and professionals.

## FLAPP! Remote support service for young people leaving care, Spain

iSocial Foundation has developed a digital remote support service for young people aged 16 to 23 who are or have been in care in the child protection system, many of whom are unaccompanied children. Available for smartphones and computers, it offers a catalogue of digital tools to facilitate the young person's process of transition to adulthood and the work of the professionals who support them. The tools offered are the possibility for them to upload and store their documents on the cloud, carry out administrative procedures, information related to emancipation and inclusion needs, direct chat with their professionals of reference, a notification system, and a map of points of interest.

## MyLearning, United Kingdom

MyLearning is a free smartphone-based service provided by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to allow Social Services workers to record and share evidence of their Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) in a convenient and simplified way. Social Services workers have been traditionally expected to record evidence of their CPL across a variety of systems, hampering their transition into new jobs and the employers' possibility to track workforce performance. This tool avoids duplication and homogenise the gathering of learning so that Social Services professionals can take ownership over it and promotes continuity of their learning over the ongoing professional positions they may undertake. MyLearning has and will continue to be updated based on users' feedback.



## Virtual reality experience for older people and people with disabilities, Sweden

The municipality of Gävle in Sweden has developed a new method of using a virtual reality technique for older people and people with disabilities. The method makes it possible for them to experience adventures that they would not be able to experience otherwise. It is a way of engaging older people and people with disabilities in stimulating activities based on their individual needs and preferences.

Participants have felt invigorated as they go beyond their daily limitations, especially during the pandemic. The initiative has also allowed professionals and participants to enjoy technology and to become more familiar with digital tools.

## Smart fall detection and monitoring system in social care centres, Latvia

This project aims to implement a single system in all municipal long-term care (LTC) centres in Riga to ensure monitoring of several indicators. These indicators include timely response of care workers in case of emergency, reduce unnecessary contact of care workers with clients, which is particularly important during crises like the Covid-19 pandemic, and provide more effective interventions. The system ensures the safety of clients in facilities and has been labelled as the only suitable system for people with dementia. The initiative is currently being piloted and has already provided evidence of safety, security, and a greater autonomy for clients. Likewise, it has reduced carers response time, easing daily work for professionals, and assuring continuity of care in situations of isolation during Covid-19.

### Technology

We ran a working group on the use of technology for the digitalisation of social services.

The aim is to reflect on how the increasing role of technology impacts social services delivery and management, and understand the challenges that the use of technology may bring for the adaptation of social services organisations. We have documented examples of electronic case management and social records including early warning systems, platforms connecting facilities or care services. Other areas of work include the use of data to support decision-making and the implementation of technology to support independent living.



# Building Resilience Celebrating Excellence

“

*It is very important to recognize the work that social services have been doing and also social workers because our whole society in a way depends on this sector.*

”

Katarina Ivankovic-Knezevic, Director for Social Rights & Inclusion  
European Commission

“

*Winning this award was important for our agency because it means more motivation to what we are doing, and more energy to continue working with people who need our services.*

”

Glenda Curmi, Agenzija Sapport, Malta

# Concluding Thoughts

Crisis after crisis, social services have heroically jumped into action making sure that they cared for those in need. They do it because of their commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in our communities despite the many challenges they face.

On 1 April, the 2021 European Social Services Awards Ceremony recognised the central role of public social services in responding to the pandemic and the post-Covid-19 recovery; and highlighting the need to strengthen public social services to improve their preparedness for future crises.

The common thread running through every 2021 Awards finalist was resilience – The theme is more pertinent than ever as social services across Europe, barely emerging from the pandemic, have been called into action once again to respond to the humanitarian crisis as millions of Ukrainians flee the invasion of their country.

During a very special afternoon, we showcased projects, teams and organisations which people using services, residents, or clients at their heart. An audience of 90 guests, including applicants, shortlisted candidates, judges, and partners joined our ceremony in Brussels to celebrate resilience in social services. the best use of research, technology and innovation and the best examples of teamwork and collaborative practice. Opening the event, guest speaker Arancha Martinez who was a winner of the European Women Innovators Awards, spoke of how these projects represented hope for the future..

In my role at ESN, I have met with many ESN members who work tirelessly to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable people in our communities. I have learnt to admire their work supporting children and young people at risk, helping adults to maintain or recover their independence, and caring for older people in need of long-term care. Katarina Ivankovic-Knezevic, Director for Social Rights and Inclusion at the European Commission highlighted how important it was to acknowledge the work that social services professionals do since they are vital to our communities' wellbeing.

At a very special afternoon, all the winners of the second edition of the European Social Services Awards were revealed. In this publication we have highlighted the winners and the finalists' innovative and fresh ways of promoting resilient social services which deliver quality care in the community.

These Awards demonstrate how public social services are making a real difference to people's lives in our countries. At the European Social Network, we are proud to continue to pay tribute to the social care and social services workforce who support people in extremely difficult and often heart-breaking situations in local communities across Europe.



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