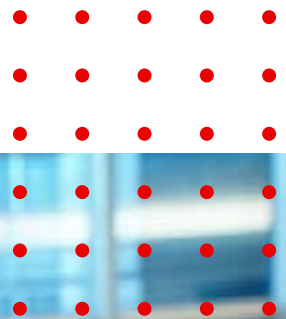


# Promoting New Models of Care and Social Services Support

The Role of EU Funding



## About the European Social Network

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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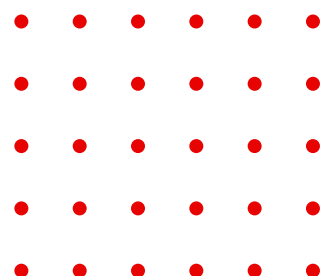
## Acknowledgements

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## Table of contents

**1.** About this briefing.....4

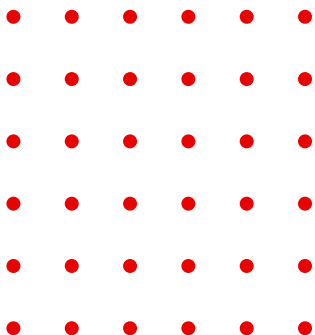
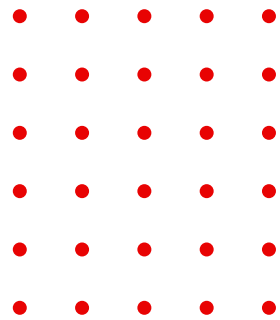
**2.** Background.....4

**3.** Building New Models of Care.....5

**4.** EU Funding to Support  
National Social Services.....6

**5.** Looking Forward.....8

**6.** References.....9



## 1. About this briefing

This briefing has been drafted in the framework of a round table organised by the European Social Network (ESN) at the European Parliament (EP) to discuss the use of European Union (EU) funding to develop new models of social care and social services.

As the European network for social services, ESN works closely with the EU to contribute towards the development of European social inclusion policies and to facilitate the design of financing strands for the social services sector. In this context, ESN advocates for the interest of the sector, supporting social services departments in public authorities, people using social services and providers, as well as assisting its members in building partnerships and exchanging good practices.

The round table took place next to the annual meeting of [ESN's Reference Group on the European Semester](#) which discussed the impact of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans on social services. Members reviewed three key policy areas related to children's services, long-term care, and support for homeless people in their national plans. An overall conclusion is that a focus on up-to-date models for social services' support was largely missing, and where there was a focus on social services, it was mainly linked to institutional infrastructure rather than promoting a model of care based at home and in the community.

We combined the expertise gained on the National Recovery and Resilience Plans with the evidence we have gathered on the social inclusion needs that should be addressed by future European Commission (EC)'s recommendations to national governments. This was followed up by a [publication](#), which contains a cross-country analysis based on information provided by members of ESN's Reference Group on the European Semester from [19 countries](#).<sup>1</sup>

The round table at the European Parliament also took place as a follow-up to ESN's work and proposals in the publication '[Funding Social Services Recovery](#)', which analyses how the national recovery plans submitted to the EU intend to fund reforms in social services. The round table aimed to highlight with MEPs the gaps identified in funding by social services and promote positive examples of EU-funded social services programmes while exploring what can be done by the Commission and the EP to make EU funds more accessible for social services to address social needs.

## 2. Background

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the pertinence of advancing care services to address the growing demand across Europe. Public social services can play a crucial role in economic recovery by supporting the social inclusion of the most vulnerable in local communities.<sup>2</sup> To achieve quality in social and care services, adequate funding is vital. Further-

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1 European Social Network, 2021. Funding Social Services Recovery - Anchoring social services in post-Covid national reform plans. Royal Library of Belgium. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/publications/funding-social-services-recovery-anchoring-social-services-post-covid-national-reform>

2 European Social Network, 2021. Covid-19 impact on Europe's social services: protecting the most vulnerable in times of crisis. Royal Library of Belgium, p. 23. Available at: [https://www.esn-eu.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Covid\\_19\\_publication\\_1.pdf](https://www.esn-eu.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Covid_19_publication_1.pdf)

more, to ensure the continuity, accessibility, adaptability, and affordability of social and care services, funding must be designed to allow public authorities with responsibility for social services to provide person-centred services in an integrated manner at home and in the community.

ESN's recent report, '[Funding Social Services Recovery -Anchoring Social Services in post-Covid National Reform Plans](#)',<sup>3</sup> discussed the need for the EU to ensure that national plans include specific investments in social services and address the realistic funding needs of social services and social care. In addition to the impact of the pandemic, the arrival of millions of Ukrainian refugees exacerbated the challenge of delivering quality social services that guarantee refugees' social inclusion due to staff shortages, limited capacity of care facilities, and inadequate funding for the social services sector.<sup>4</sup>

At this round table discussion, ESN members at the sharp end of delivering social services discussed their needs in relation to funding to address the post-Covid recovery, support the social inclusion of Ukrainian refugees, and, more broadly, put in place social services which are fit for current and future needs. The challenges and responses to the war in Ukraine, the impact of available EU funds on social service providers, and critical developments in new models of care were also detailed. Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the European Commission shared insights on recent European policy developments. Overall, an emphasis was placed on the great significance of EU funding opportunities to combat the impact of the pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine.

### 3. Building New Models of Care

Emphasising the significance of the recently published [European Care Strategy](#), MEP Frances Fitzgerald highlighted the growing need for community-based care, stating that there is now an opportunity to address community challenges and solutions from an EU perspective. MEP Fitzgerald touched upon some persistent challenges facing social services in the EU, starting with the lack of data, "simply put, social service authorities and providers do not have access to the right statistics." With this, MEP Fitzgerald recommended that data at European level should provide information and guidance across EU Member States, stimulating the European-wide exchange of best practices.

Furthermore, Ms Fitzgerald expressed concern regarding the large gender gap in the care workforce: "with seven and a half million women to 400,000 men." To combat the gender gap, Ms Fitzgerald indicated that more training opportunities are needed to encourage and motivate men to enter the care sector. Similarly, ESN has proposed that "the Commission works with national governments to put in place specific social services workforce strategies that, amongst others, improve the attractiveness of the sector, its development and resources."<sup>5</sup>

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3 European Social Network, 2021. Funding Social Services Recovery - Anchoring social services in post-Covid national reform plans. Royal Library of Belgium, pp. 62-63. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/publications/funding-social-services-recovery-anchoring-social-services-post-covid-national-reform>

4 European Social Network, 2021. Putting People First Investing in Social Services Promoting Social inclusion. Royal Library of Belgium, p. 38. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/publications/putting-people-first-investing-social-services-promoting-social-inclusion>

5 European Social Network, 2022. Attracting men in social services and social care. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/news/attracting-men-social-services-and-social-care>

Ms Fitzgerald also outlined key measures from an EU perspective. For instance, having targets for long-term care, like targets for childcare, while also identifying an essential role for the European Parliament in monitoring the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility from a social perspective. In line with this, in its 2021 report on [Integrated Care and Support](#), ESN recommended that the evaluation of integrated services should become routine practice, focusing on the outcomes defined with stakeholders involved, including people using services, their carers, and families.<sup>6</sup>

## 4. EU Funding to Support National Social Services

As discussed at the round table, EU funding is crucial to the continuous development of the quality, management, and scope of social services. MEP Pedro Marques opened the round table discussion by stating, “when EU funding is funnelled into set goals, such as employment and training, social services are given further opportunities to address key social issues, including poverty, unemployment, and inequality.”

Spain’s Secretary of State for Social Rights, Ignacio Álvarez Peralta, outlined new models of community-based care made possible by the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Facility. Community care refers to any form of support and care provided in the local community enabling people to overcome or manage any condition, disability, or life difficulties they may face.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, community-based care experienced changes, adapting to a post-Covid environment. Some of the changes Mr Peralta outlined in the discussion included more support for vulnerable children, such as foster care for children in child protection and financially supporting families with children, the use of home equipment supporting tele-care, and the promotion of social innovation in cooperation with the third sector. His intervention also emphasised the EU’s responsibility to promote deinstitutionalisation programmes across Europe by “promoting community-integrated care services.” Along this line, ESN’s report on developing community-based care states that “deinstitutionalisation cannot be successful without the involvement of users, their families, care staff and the community in which they are to live.”<sup>8</sup>

Social Services Directors from Slovenia and Italy also shared examples of social services programmes supported with EU funding from their respective countries. Rok Zupanc, Regional Director for Zasavje’s Centre for Social Work in Slovenia, stated, “EU funding is addressing social issues in Slovenia through the development of a long-term care system for all age groups, increasing the accessibility of care.” At this moment, long-term care is receiving the most investment in Slovenia, as it will be one of the oldest societies in Europe by 2050. Regional Director for Social Inclusion, Ornella Guglielmino from Lazio, Italy, explained that EU investment initiatives have allowed her region to co-finance social services and healthcare, supporting sectors left ill-protected after the pandemic.

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6 European Social Network, 2021. Integrated Care and Support Promoting Partnerships across Services, Improving Lives. Royal Library of Belgium, p. 47. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/publications/integrated-care-and-support-promoting-partnerships-across-services-improving-lives>

7 European Social Network. Policy: Community Care. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/policy/community-care>

8 European Social Network, 2011. Developing Community Care. Executive Summary. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/publications/2011-developing-community-care-executive-summary>



In the past, EU funds allocation prioritised mostly employment-related programmes in line with the responsibilities set out in the EU treaties. However, since 2013 operational programmes have had an increasing focus on social inclusion, which leads to a larger provision of EU funding foreseen for the development of programmes that social services manage to guarantee people's inclusion in the community. This need has become even more pressing due to the impact of the recent Covid-19 and Ukraine crises. The European Commission's Director for Funds, Ruth Paserman, outlined some new and existing initiatives being used to tackle the problems revealed by the recent crises.

Ms Paserman listed the following EU funds available for social services: the 'European Social Fund Plus' (ESF+) to invest in people –promoting high employment levels, building social protection and developing a skilled and resilient workforce;<sup>9</sup> the 'European Regional Development Fund' (ERDF) to develop social service infrastructure, redressing key regional imbalances across the EU;<sup>10</sup> the 'Recovery and Resilience Facility', to mitigate the economic and social impact of Covid-19;<sup>11</sup> and cohesion funding to support people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine.<sup>12</sup>

ESN continues to advocate that EU funds, including the Recovery and Resilience Funds, are used to put in place integrated social inclusion programmes for those furthest from the labour market, promote social inclusion and support homeless people in an integrated manner; rebuild resilient child protection family-based services and home and community-based long-term care; develop a resilient workforce with new digital tools; and invest in resilient local and regional social services that ensure the continuity of care and support."<sup>13</sup>

Ms Paserman stated that "EU funding, especially the ESF, has addressed structural challenges in areas worst affected and left most vulnerable by these crises." However, Trees De Bruycker, Director of Social Services in Ghent, Belgium, stressed the need for long-term investment programmes stating that there are no quick solutions to social issues. Some key challenges surrounding the implementation of EU funds were expressed during this discussion. For example, variations in the involvement of countries, lack of synergies between different projects, and the short timeframe and scope of projects funded by the RRF which might lead to lack of absorption and use of funding.<sup>14</sup>

To ensure that social services are aware of available funding opportunities and that EU and managing authorities understand better the funding needs that social services have, ESN is a partner in the project 'Social Services Helpdesk on EU Funds.'<sup>15</sup> Ms Paserman

9 European Commission, 2021. European Social Fund: A New, Stronger European Social Fund Plus. Available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=62&langId=en>

10 European Parliament, 2021. Fact Sheets on the European Union, Regional and Cohesion Policy: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/95/european-regional-development-fund-erdf>

11 European Commission, 2021. Recovery and Resilience Facility: The Recovery and Resilience Facility. Available at:

[https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en)

12 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_1607](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1607)

13 European Social Network, 2021. Funding Social Services Recovery - Anchoring social services in post-Covid national reform plans. Royal Library of Belgium, pp. 6-7. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/publications/funding-social-services-recovery-anchoring-social-services-post-covid-national-reform>

14 European Social Network, 2021. Funding Social Services Recovery - Anchoring social services in post-Covid national reform plans. Royal Library of Belgium, pp. 19-21. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/publications/funding-social-services-recovery-anchoring-social-services-post-covid-national-reform>

15 European Social Network, 2022. News: EU Funding Helpdesk for Social Services – a new initiative to support public

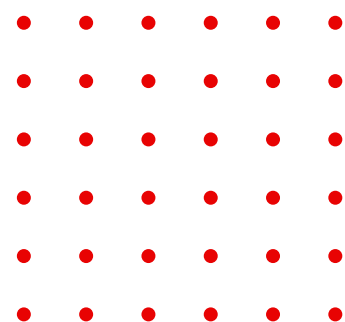
highlighted the importance of this project to facilitate partnerships between managing authorities and social services, supporting them with comprehensive guidance on access to EU funding. The Helpdesk project aims to reach social services at local, regional, and national level and provide information on how EU funds can be used for the development of social services programmes.

## 5. Looking Forward

EU funding has been a cross-cutting theme in several ESN reports, where key recommendations were made to achieve and sustain quality social and care services. For instance, ESN emphasised the importance of national governments cooperating with regional and local public social services to invest in their post-Covid social transformation programmes. Some key proposals highlighted include the modernisation of social care and social services, partnerships across services and sectors, national social services workforce strategies, and economic activation and job creation in the economy of care.<sup>16</sup>

ESN also recommended that the Commission should assess the national resilience and transformation plans in a way that their assessment underlines the need to invest in structural reforms that transform the model of public social services and social care to one that promotes preventive family and community-based social services; reinforces home care; ensures community social care after hospital discharge; and addresses current employment and skill gaps.<sup>17</sup>

To conclude the round table discussion, ESN CEO Alfonso Lara Montero stressed that “the responsibility to protect vulnerable people lies with public authorities.” For public authorities to achieve this, Mr Lara Montero stated that funding, including EU funds, is a crucial incentive for European countries to ensure care and social services are more resilient, person-centred, and brought closer to the community.<sup>18</sup>



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social services kicks off. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/news/eu-funding-helpdesk-social-services-new-initiative-support-public-social-services-kicks>

16 European Social Network, 2021. Funding Social Services Recovery - Anchoring social services in post-Covid national reform plans. Royal Library of Belgium, pp. 19-21. Available at: <https://www.esn-eu.org/publications/funding-social-services-recovery-anchoring-social-services-post-covid-national-reform>

17 Ibid, p. 63.

18 Ibid, pp. 18-21.



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