

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024

The Social Services
Network for Europe



Co-funded by
the European Union





About the European Social Network (ESN)

The European Social Network (ESN) represents the voice of public social services as employers, managers, funders, planners, deliverers, and inspectors of social services in Europe.

ESN inspires social services leaders to improve the lives of people in the community through the development and exchange of knowledge to improve policy and practice in public social services, including all support and community-based services fighting poverty, promoting social inclusion and autonomy, child protection, protection of people with disabilities, care and support for older people, homeless people, as well as people and families in disadvantaged socio-economic situations.

This publication has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation 'EaSI' (2021-2027). For further information, visit <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

Published: February 2025

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Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues and Members,

2024 has been a year marked by significant geopolitical challenges and their profound impact on social services across Europe and beyond. The shifting political landscape has tested our resilience and adaptability, yet it has also underscored the critical importance of our work in supporting communities and individuals during times of uncertainty.

This year has also seen notable changes in leadership within the European Union, bringing fresh perspectives and renewed commitments to social welfare and cohesion. These changes present both opportunities and challenges as we navigate the evolving policy environment and strive to enhance the quality and accessibility of social services.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our members, ESN staff, representatives on the Board and Council, and partners for their unwavering dedication and hard work. Their contributions have been invaluable in advancing our mission and ensuring that we continue to provide essential support to those in

need. Together, we have made significant strides in addressing the complex issues facing our societies, and I am confident that we will continue to build on this momentum in the coming year.

As we look ahead to 2025, let us remain committed to our shared goals and values, and continue to work collaboratively to create a more inclusive and supportive social network for all.

Thank you for your ongoing support and engagement.

Warm regards,

Christian Fillet
Chair, European Social Network



Letter from the CEO

Dear Members and Partners,

As we reflect on the past year, I am honoured to share with you the achievements and progress of the European Social Network in advancing social services across Europe. This year has underscored the critical role we play in supporting communities, fostering inclusion, and addressing the pressing challenges facing our societies.

Through collaboration with our members and partners, we have strengthened our impact in key areas such as social inclusion, access to essential social services, promoting a new model of community care, and workforce development. Our initiatives have reached thousands of individuals, providing support to those most vulnerable in our society.

Major highlights of 2024 include the 32nd European Social Services Conference in Antwerp, and the European Social Services Awards in Lisbon, both of which were our most well-attended to date. We also hosted our child protection seminar in Bucharest in cooperation with national agencies and international partners.

The resilience and dedication of our members across Europe has been the driving force behind these accomplishments, in a year where we saw changes in European leadership following the June elections. Our collective efforts are a powerful testament to the strength of solidarity.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on our shared mission to inspire social services leaders to improve the lives of people in the community. We will continue to work together to ensure equitable access to social services and to address emerging challenges, such as the growing need for sustainable and inclusive care models. As we look to our future strategic plan, I would like to emphasise the importance of partnership, capacity building, solidarity, and innovation, underpinned by a commitment to the values that unite us.

I am deeply grateful for your unwavering support and contributions to our collective success. Together, we will continue to build a more inclusive, compassionate, and resilient Europe.

Best wishes,

Alfonso Lara-Montero

Chief Executive Officer
European Social Network

2024 IN NUMBERS

184 Members in **34** Countries

ESN organised **16** Events

ESN spoke at **59** Events

68,200 Website Users

337 Participants at EC Co-Funded Work Programme Events

2,276 Publication Downloads

24,000 News Subscribers

European Social Services Awards

35,000 Votes Cast

45 Shortlisted Projects

103 Submitted Projects from

19 Countries

European Social Services Conference

23 Speakers

145 Presenters

39 Sessions

695 Delegates from

34 Countries

2024 ACTIVITIES

March 25-26
Rome, Italy

Working Group on Social
Services Transformation
and Resilience



April 18-19
Vienna, Austria

Working Group on Quality
in Social Services



**September 30-
1 October**
Bucharest, Romania

Protecting Children:
Working in Partnership
across Children's Services



October 16
Brussels, Belgium

Towards a European Social
Services Framework –
European Roundtable



November 4-5
Lisbon, Portugal

European Social Services
Awards 2024



April 4
Online

Building Resilient and
Adaptable Child and Family
Services Webinar with Deloitte



June 26-28
Antwerp, Belgium

European Social Services
Conference 2024



October 15-16
Brussels, Belgium

Social Services Index



October 30
Online

The Power of Data Webinar
with EY Consulting

SHARE

Current Policy and Practice





Building partnerships is essential to ensure the implementation of successful programmes in the key areas around which child protection is built: prevention and intervention. Through these areas, the goal is to strengthen families and support children to grow in a safe and healthy environment.

This was the basis for ESN's 2024 annual seminar held in Bucharest, Romania. The seminar was co-hosted with our member Bucharest's 6th District City Council – General Directorate for Social Care and Child Protection, and in partnership with UNICEF Romania, World Bank Romania, the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption, the Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations for Children, and Save the Children Romania.

With more than 150 social services professionals, decision-makers, and people with lived experience in attendance, the seminar highlighted key challenges and opportunities within child protection, including fostering greater inter-agency collaboration, developing formal frameworks and protocols for continuous and consistent protection and the importance of data monitoring and collection to design appropriate interventions.

ESN has published a briefing reflecting on the findings from its questionnaire on integrated child protection, desk research, and discussions held at the seminar, and will continue to work closely with members in Romania and beyond on the topic of child protection.

ESN in the Media

ESN's Annual Seminar received national coverage on Romanian news channel B1 TV, discussing the topics covered in the event.

You can watch the coverage (RO) at <http://bit.ly/3WXR4Dh>

In partnership with:



I was very pleased to see that the event was designed as a seminar...and that it included workshops that conveyed concrete promising practices from the local level and provided plenty of space for interaction with other participants."

Sandra Aigner-Accardo, Project Manager,
European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

Working with ESN in the organisation of the annual seminar on protecting children was a great opportunity for my Romanian colleagues and me to network with European peers and exchange ideas, best practice and hopes for the future of child protection."

Gabriela Schmutzer,
Bucharest's 6th District City Council - General Directorate
for Social Care and Child Protection, Romania

**Protecting Children,
Working in Partnership Across
Children's Services**



You can read and download the ESN Publication on Protecting Children, Working in Partnership Across Children's Services, at the following link <https://bit.ly/3DvAQOB>



Peer Learning Visits

Since 2014, ESN has run the **Peer Learning Visits Programme**, where visiting organisations can learn about programmes ran by other ESN Members with the aim of implementing similar programmes in their own communities.

In 2024, ESN facilitated three such visits:

Carr Gomm, a Scottish social care and community development organisation, visited the **City of Höganäs** in Sweden to learn about how they use QR codes linked to personalised videos connected to people's support plans.

Agenzija Sapport, Malta, visited the **Quality Improvement Team** within the **Health Service Executive (HSE)** in Ireland to learn about their tools and resources to evaluate social services with an inclusive and collaborative approach.

Representatives from **Barcelona County Council** visited the **Regional Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Equality of Saxony-Anhalt** in Germany to learn about a programme to create professional roles as 'participation managers' for persons with disabilities in 20 municipalities.



This visit served as an opportunity to accentuate further the importance of co-production. We were able to appreciate that people with disabilities, through their lived experience, can serve as very important stakeholders when it comes to creating and enhancing services."

Carl Fenech,
Agenzija Sapport, Malta



I deeply value the power of relationships built on shared passion and values. My recent visit to Hoganäs, Sweden, reaffirmed this, highlighting the immense value of sharing knowledge and experiences that I can then implement in my own practice."

Anne-Louise Hayden,
Carr Gomm, United Kingdom

Podcasts

In 2023, ESN launched their own podcast series, as a place to give a voice to the social services professionals on the frontline. In 2024, this series further addressed relevant issues in the world of social services today, such as community care, social policy coordination, priorities for the next European Parliament and Commission, person-centred care, and harnessing technology and digitalisation in social services.

You can listen to the ESN Talks podcast series on our website at www.esn-eu.org/podcasts

Episode 6: Navigating the Transition to Community Care

European Social Network TALKS

Episode 6

Navigating the Transition to Community Care

Tara Doherty

Service Reform Manager, Genio, Ireland

Spela Rezun

Director of VDC Zasavje, a public regional social centre in Slovenia

Episode 7: European Social Services Index: A Comprehensive Overview and Recommendations for Social Services Across Europe

European Social Network TALKS

Episode 7

European Social Services Index: A Comprehensive Overview and Recommendations for Social Services Across Europe

Graham Owen

European Representative at the Swedish Association of Directors of Social Services (FSS)

Episode 8: Shaping the Future: Social Services Priorities for the European Elections

European Social Network TALKS

Episode 8

Shaping the Future: Social Services Priorities for the European Elections

Arnaud Lopez

Member of the Board of ANDASS (National Association of Social and Health Directors), France

Kathleen Wabrowetz

Head of the International Affairs Department at the Association for Public and Private Welfare, Germany

Episode 9: Promoting Person-Centred Care in Rural Communities

European Social Network TALKS

Episode 9

Promoting Person-Centred Care in Rural Communities

Igone Arrieta

Administrative Assistant for Social Services at City Council of Churriana de la Vega - Department of Social Services, Spain

Ann Osborn

CEO, Rural Coffee Caravan, United Kingdom

Episode 10: Integrated Case Management: Challenges & Opportunities

European Social Network TALKS

Episode 10

Integration Case Management: Challenges & Opportunities

Alfred Grixti

CEO at the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS), Malta

Antero Lehmuskoski

Chief Specialist at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Finland

Webinars

As well as hosting its own podcast series, ESN co-hosts webinars with its industry partners, with in-depth discussions on relevant topics alongside innovation and best practices within the sector to stimulate discussion and contribute to the ongoing development of social services.


If you are an organisation interested in partnering with the European Social Network and co-hosting a webinar, please contact ESN Development Coordinator, Francesco Capuani, at francesco.capuani@esn-eu.org to set up a meeting.

In 2024, ESN hosted the following webinars:

Building Resilient and Adaptable Child and Family Services – Deloitte – 4 April 2024



The Power of Data – EY Consulting – 30 October 2024



You can watch the webinars from 2023 and 2024 on the ESSC website at <https://essc-eu.org/conference-webinar-programme/>.

Contributing to EU Policy

In 2024, ESN actively engaged with partners through the **European Expert Group on the Transition to Community Care**, of which ESN will assume its rotating presidency in 2025, as well as EU institutions, to contribute to the development of European social policies, including:

Participation at consultations on the Child Guarantee, the EU Care Strategy, the ESF+ and the Disability Platform. We provided input to draft EU guidelines on independent living for people with disabilities, underscoring the essential role of local authorities in community-based care and support and a potential social services excellence framework for people with disabilities.

Delivering impactful presentations at high-level events, organised by the European Commission, the Belgian and Hungarian EU Presidencies in technology and inclusion, community care, and quality assurance in social services.

Supporting EU legislative processes by meeting political parties and MEPs ahead of the European elections, submitting amendments to the European Parliament (EP)'s Multiannual Financial Framework report, advocating for greater investment in social services, and draft EP reports on the European Semester 2025 employment and social priorities, as well as the upcoming EP report on public procurement.

Running a series of articles in European and national press advocating for a social affairs Commissioner with a strong social portfolio.

Drafting a report for the Council of Europe for the development of a resolution inviting local and regional authorities to invest in prevention and community-based programmes to improve quality social care for older people.

Stronger Social Services – A Better Europe



Ahead of the EU elections we ran a consultation with our members and came up with four priorities that will guide our work and relations with MEPs in this mandate:

Social Services Financing

Social Services Quality

Integrated, Person-centred, Community-based Care

Strengthening the Social Services Workforce

This briefing provides proposals for policy initiatives on social inclusion and social services to future Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and lead candidates for the European Commission Presidency.

To find out more about these priorities, you can read our briefing on the ESN website at <https://bit.ly/3QdwMgQ>



BUILD

Knowledge to Develop
Quality Social Services

Working Group on Social Services Transformation and Resilience

Rome, Italy
25 - 26 March 2024

Hosted by:



REGIONE
LAZIO

In partnership with:



Digitalisation of public services across Europe has been a key component of government modernisation strategies, aimed at improving their efficiency, accessibility, and transparency. However, EU Member States have only recently embraced e-government solutions to better serve citizens.

At the third Working Group on Social Services Transformation and Resilience, hosted in Rome, Italy, with our member Regione Lazio, the impact of digitalisation on social services was the key topic of discussion, focusing on digital transformation in social services, with the aim of identifying and assessing best practice on the use of digital case management and AI-led tools for the assessment and use of data for predictive services.

Members from five countries presented best practices based on data management and the use of AI in social services to stimulate discussions on how digital solutions can be adapted and expanded across Europe.

What became clear was that emerging technologies that support service and case management digitalisation, data analysis, prediction, referrals and service advice can be a transformative tool, empowering social services professionals to excel in what they do best: using their empathy and expertise to help people.

However, most social services directors are not yet fully familiar with the various uses of IT for social services, illustrating that there is still a significant level of mistrust in these technologies.

ESN will continue to encourage further cooperation that can contribute to the transformation of social services, to make them more resilient to future crises.

By harnessing digitalisation and AI responsibly, we can focus on what truly matters: understanding and supporting people in need."

Ornella Guglielmino,
Regione Lazio, Italy

Embracing digital case management isn't just about technology — it's about giving social services professionals more time to build relationships and deliver personalised care. Trusting these tools is key to transforming how we serve our communities."

Kathleen Wabrowetz, German Association
for Public and Private Welfare, Germany

Digital Transformation for Resilient Social Services



You can read and download the ESN
Publication on Digital Transformation for
Resilient Social Services at the following
link <https://bit.ly/3CKXJ8g>



Working Group on Quality in Social Services

Vienna, Austria
18-19 April 2024

Hosted by:



Since 2022, the ESN Working Group on Quality in Social Services has been developing proposals for a revamped European Social Services Quality Framework that considers current social services trends and developments.

Following an assessment of the key principles of quality relevant for social services, the third meeting of the Working Group, in cooperation with Kuratorium Wiener Pensionisten-Wohnhäuser, brought together 35 social services directors, professionals, and researchers from 17 European countries, representing local, regional, and national public social services, quality inspection agencies, research organisations and professionals. Participants discussed what a more relevant and useful European Quality Framework for Social Services could look like, building from the 2022 and 2023 Working Group meetings.

This year's participants drew up quality standards formulated as 'I-Statements', 'We-Statements', and 'Arrangements', built on six previously developed key quality principles. These statements were developed based on already common practice in some countries and updated.

The final proposals will now be fine-tuned and will receive a final review by professionals and people using services, before being presented to the European Commission in 2025 as an initiative to be taken forward.



The most important standard of quality in social services is that they need to be client and person-centred, needs-based, and accessible."

Heinz Stieb,
Consortium of Retirement Homes
in Vienna, Austria



I think the European Union has a good opportunity to bring in a new framework and establish a basic way that it could be implemented in each country."

Jan Michalsky,
Social Services Department-Banska
Bystrica Self-Governing Region, Slovakia

Towards a European Framework for Quality in Social Services



You can read and download the ESN Publication, Towards a European Framework for Quality in Social Services, at the following link <https://bit.ly/4182Mca>



European Projects

ESN develops mutually beneficial long-term cooperation with a range of organisations to pursue excellence and innovation in social services to better support those in need.

Alongside our framework partnership agreement with the European Commission, ESN has developed, and is involved in, several European and national projects in areas like child protection, integrated care, and social services innovation.

ESN in the Media

As part of the broader discussion on long-term care, ESN CEO Alfonso Lara Montero published an article in Entremayores in Spain on the subject.

“We should look at long-term care as a life-long cycle policy since the moment we are born until the moment we die” (ES)

Alfonso Lara Montero
Entremayores, 14 October 2024

You can read this article below.

<https://bit.ly/3Ey6pzz>

ESN has developed, or is currently involved in, the following projects:

ACE to support innovations in home care for older people with support needs

Eldicare 2.0 to support the upskilling and reskilling of the long-term care workforce to better fulfil the care needs of older people.

LINK to contribute to a new transferrable ‘Learning & Innovation Lab’ model to deliver more integrated and person-centred health and social care services to vulnerable populations.

LAUREL to support the development of an integrated long-term care model that truly includes a health and social perspective.

NEAR to improve knowledge exchange and the social services role on reinforcing effective guardianship

INSPIRE to support with evidence the development of a framework for social services in rural areas

SISWEC to support the improvement of social workers skills in response to major crises that Europe is currently facing.

The following projects concluded in 2024:

Reticulate piloted an integrated system of social inclusion support for people furthest from the labour market, concluding with an integrated systems model presented at several events.

Side-by-Side concluded with a compendium of good practice on preventive practice to fight violence against children and a report assessing the needs of child protection professionals to effectively address this issue.

SESK aimed to support social services to better access and use EU funds for social inclusion programmes and to help Managing Authorities understand how they can better support social services access European funding.

xEITU aimed to test a new model of employment and social services coordination to transform the regional minimum income into a new model of social inclusion support.

Technical Assistance

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

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

Below, you will find some examples of technical assistance ESN provided in 2024:

- A child protection social services review for the **Foundation for Social Welfare Services in Malta**
- A series of workshops on the development of community care for social services directors, at a training programme led by **Janusz Korczak University, Poland**
- A working group of general directors from Spanish regions to assess the scaling up of a new model of residential care in policies within their regions in connection with a recovery and resilience programme led by **Matia Foundation**
- A series of articles for academic and public administration schools’ publications on social **innovation, technology and AI in social services**

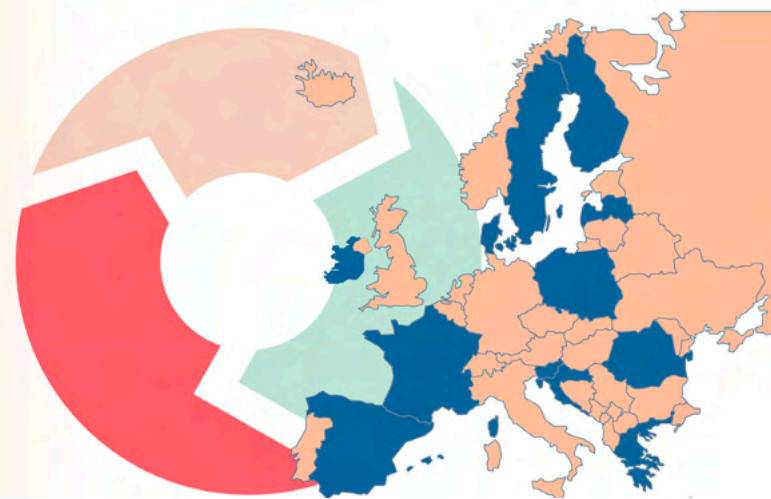
INFORM

International and
National Policymaking



Social Services Index

Brussels, Belgium
15 - 16 October 2024



In 2023, ESN launched the Social Services Index to assess the national social services situation and contribute to the European Semester of economic and social policy coordination between the European Commission and national governments.

The Index addresses three key areas: social services legislation and policy, economic investment and coverage through national info sheets and a cross-country analysis. In 2024, we collected data from 13 EU countries.

Key findings from this year's Cross-Country Analysis included:

- Differences in recognising social services as individual rights, defining services by law, and the strategic planning of services alongside its distribution
- Variance in budget and levels of investment at national and local levels
- Disparities in the availability of essential social services, including long-term care, child protection, domestic violence support, and homelessness aid

Therefore, we also developed recommendations for each country, tailored to their specific circumstances.



"The Index is a rich source of data for the Commission's analysis of national social policies...I encourage colleagues to read the results of your work."

Katia Berti,
Directorate-General for Employment,
Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL)

"I believe that the work of this group will be essential to ensure that the Index becomes a valuable tool for addressing gaps and improving social services delivery across Europe."

Ana Radulescu,
Centre for Training and Assessment
in Social Work (CFCECAS), Romania

ESN Social Services Index 2024 – Cross-Country Analysis



You can read and download the ESN Publication, ESN Social Services Index 2024 – Cross-Country Analysis, at the following link bit.ly/4hNNkYn



Towards a European Social Services Framework

Roundtable - European Parliament

Brussels, Belgium
16 October 2024



Against the backdrop of the incoming European Parliament and Commission, moving towards a European Social Services Framework was the key theme of the European Parliament Round Table in October 2024, organised by ESN and hosted by MEP Alex Agius Saliba.

ESN was joined by representatives from the European Parliament, the European Commission, national governments, and social services from across Europe to discuss future social services priorities considering EU social inclusion policy, particularly the action plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights (ESPR), and the newly announced EU Anti-Poverty Strategy.

ESN members from Ireland, Spain, Poland, Romania, Greece, and France presented examples of common challenges and solutions for social services development focusing on ensuring quality, developing the workforce, transforming the model of care, and promoting a sustainable financial model to highlight the areas that should be prioritised by EU decision-makers.

It was clear that coordinated action at EU level is needed to ensure that social services can continue to fulfil their mission of supporting the social inclusion of Europe's most vulnerable. The need for a European

Social Services Framework was also highlighted as a robust way to address financing, workforce development, and quality standards.

ESN will continue working with the European Parliament and the European Commission to build a truly inclusive and social Europe, starting with our ongoing contact with MEPs to support the promotion of social rights and social services within the new Commissioner's portfolio and EP's work and our proposal for a revamped European Quality Framework to reinforce social services across Europe.



“

*We need to change the narrative.
Less warfare, more welfare. If we have
money for war, we should have money
for the welfare state.”*

Alex Agius Saliba, MEP,
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats



“

*I gained a better understanding of the
EU agenda and actions to support the
development of social services across
Europe.”*

Pawel Rabiej,
Korczak University, Poland



NETWORK

with Key Decision-Makers
and Peers across Europe



Co-creating Future Social Services

European Social Services Conference 2024

Antwerp, Belgium
26 - 28 June 2024



Hosted by: Under the framework of:



In partnership with:

Deloitte.



Co-creation is a key instrument for social services leaders to make their services more effective at improving people's life outcomes. By co-creating support programmes, public authorities in collaboration with service providers and people using services, can make social services more person-centred, thereby ensuring they effectively respond to people's real needs.

At the 32nd European Social Services Conference (ESSC), co-creation was the central message as almost 700 social services leaders from 37 countries came together in Antwerp, Belgium, to share their experiences and collaborate on the future of social services. Discussions in Antwerp centred around how we can co-create community-based social services, with a specific focus on local social inclusion, managing the future workforce, digital development in social services, and co-creation in EU policy.

Insights from this year's conference highlighted the importance of co-creation as a powerful tool for empowering people using social services by involving them directly in the decision-making process, as well as encourage responsive and adaptive services through diverse perspectives and expertise.

Ultimately, co-creation is about better outcomes for people using social services, and by ensuring that services are user-centred and tailored to people's real needs, there is a higher likelihood of achieving better results.



The European Social Services Conference is playing a very substantial role in developing, strengthening and also adapting social services to the needs of today and tomorrow."

Nicolas Schmit,
European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, European Commission



It is important to be able to share these experiences at a broader level, because it allows you to take them to other places and grow."

Carme Torras,
Spanish Scientific Research Council (CSIC), Spain

ESSC 2024 - Co-Creating Future Social Services



Co-Creating Future Social Services

European Social Services Conference 2024

REPORT

26-28 June 2024
Antwerp, Belgium



You can read and download the ESSC 2024 Conference report at the following link <https://bit.ly/4aXc7ao>



Transforming Social Services

Where Care Meets Tech

Hosted by:



Supported by:



Partners confirmed so far:



Join us in Aarhus, Denmark between 22-25 June 2025, where discussions will focus on two key drivers of social services transformation: **relational welfare approaches** and **welfare technology**.

Entitled '**Where Care Meets Tech**,' the 2025 Conference will bring together leaders in social services from across the world to discuss collaboration on enhancing personalisation and utilising technology in the design and delivery of social services.

To find out more, please visit the ESSC website at www.essc-eu.org.

Register now to join the conversation and help shape the social services of the future!

The City of Aarhus

Click the link below to find out more about this year's host, the City of Aarhus

<https://bit.ly/4by3x1R>



2024

European Social Services Awards

Promoting Inclusive Communities



4 - 5 November 2024
Lisbon, Portugal



Hosted by:



In partnership with:



The annual European Social Services Awards (ESSA) acknowledges outstanding achievements in social services, shining a spotlight on successful new approaches and the extraordinary ongoing work of public social services managers, funders, planners, providers, and deliverers of social services from all over the world.

Now in its sixth edition, the Awards have honoured over 250 finalists from across Europe and the wider international community. Over the past few years, the Awards have brought together more than 650 participants.

The theme for the 2024 edition of the European Social Services Awards was **'Promoting Inclusive Communities'**.

Under this theme, the Awards provided recognition to people and organisations that centre the provision of social services around the community, honouring practices and approaches that prioritise the participation of vulnerable populations in the delivery, design and planning of services as a way of enabling the development of inclusive, resilient, and sustainable neighbourhoods.



Lisbon has been a partner of the European Social Network for many years so it made perfect sense that we became host of the European Social Services Awards in 2024."

Miguel Luís Ferreira Soares,
Department of Social Rights, Lisbon, Portugal



The awards are a good way to highlight not just the day-to-day work that people are doing, but the contribution that social services make to our society as a whole."

Vikky Butler, Community Action in Research and Policy
(C.A.R.P) Collaborations, United Kingdom



Our 2024 Winners



Service Delivery

REACH_U 2.0,
CRESCER, Portugal



Collaborative Practice

Deinstitutionalisation and Reform of the Care System
for Young Children,
Hope and Homes for Children, Bulgaria



Workplace Support

Supporting Family Caregivers: Taking Care of Those
Who Care,
ATS Bergamo – Health Protection Agency,
Department of Planning for the Integration of
Health and Social Services, Italy



Research and Evaluation

Evaluation of Community-Led Support,
University of Birmingham, United Kingdom



Digital Transformation

Ensuring Web Accessibility for Persons with
Disabilities,
The Agency for Sustainable and Operative Social
Provision (DOST), Azerbaijan



Excellence in Communities

BIO-CARES: Community-Delivered, Person-Centred
Care in Rural Areas,
Confederation of Rural Development Centres
(COCEDER), Spain

We are thrilled to announce that the **City of Madrid** will host the 2025 European Social Services Awards (ESSA) in November 2025. This exciting event will bring together the most impactful initiatives in the social services sector, celebrating the innovation and excellence that drive positive change across Europe.

Hosted by:



Submissions for the 2025 European Social Services Awards in Madrid will open in Spring 2025.

- 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

Please visit the ESSA website at <https://essa-eu.org> to find out how you can get involved.



Our Members

ESN brings together **184** organisations from **34** countries, representing millions of 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, applied research institutes working on social services improvement; social services providers; and regulators and inspection agencies.



It is crucial to connect with the current challenges and priorities in social services... ESN provides a unique network to keep us informed of the latest developments and innovations."

Professor Robin Miller,
University of Birmingham, United Kingdom



For me, I would say that the work of the ESN is very much about realising how much as Europeans we are stronger together."

Arnaud Lopez,
Département des Yvelines, France



Become a Member

The European Social Network (ESN) represents the voice of public social services as employers, managers, funders, planners, deliverers, and inspectors of social services in Europe.

Organisations who wish to join us as a member can gain access to specific benefits depending on their membership, such as:

- Discounted participation fees at our flagship events: the European Social Services Awards (ESSA) and European Social Services Conference (ESSC)
- Access to the Member's Area, where ESN and members can collaborate, share knowledge and best practice
- Be featured on our Online Library and website
- Regular updates on member's activities and EU policy monitoring
- Funded participation at selected activities under programmes co-funded by the European Commission
- Participation in our Peer Learning Visits programme
- Receive tailored support in building links with specific members

Our current membership types include:

Core Members: Public Authorities; Associations of Social Service Directors within & outside Europe.

Associate Members: Professional Associations; Inspection & Development Bodies; Service Providers; Applied Research Organisations within & outside Europe

Council Membership

All ESN members may request to be part of the Council, guiding ESN's strategic direction and making decisions about the organisation's operations and development. The ESN Council is made up of 20 to 25 organisations and meets twice per year.

For more information on how to join ESN, please fill in the contact form at the link below or contact our Membership Team at membership@esn-eu.org.



Become a Partner

As the leading network of social services leaders in Europe, partnering with ESN enables organisations to connect with a broad audience of national, regional, and local authorities that manage and oversee Europe's social services – the core members of ESN.

Through our Awards, Conference and other annual events, ESN has developed mutually beneficial long-term cooperation with partners to pursue excellence and innovation in social services to:

LEARN about latest social policy and practice trends

MEET with social services leaders to develop future cooperation

SHOWCASE products and solutions and gather immediate feedback

We have developed long-standing relationships with our partners so get in touch and be part of an amazing community of people striving to improve the lives of people in our communities. Get in touch with ESN Development Coordinator, Francesco Capuani, at francesco.capuani@esn-eu.org to set up a meeting.



Engaging directly with social services professionals from across Europe helps us to tailor our innovations to address real-world challenges and create more resilient services."

Carola Winberg, Tietoevry



Partnering with the European Social Network has allowed us to connect directly with social services leaders across Europe. These interactions help us to understand better how our strategic and technological insights can enhance public social services."

Jessica Chamba, EY Consulting

Governance

The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees are legally responsible for overseeing the management, financing, and work of the Network and its members' interests. The Trustees meet regularly throughout the year, and do not receive payment for their work on behalf of ESN.

The Council

The Council consists of 24 national and regional authorities and organisations of social services directors. They are voting members who, among other responsibilities, elect the Board of Trustees. They are responsible for the overall direction and approval of the annual accounts.

Current ESN Trustees



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



Graham Owen – **ESN Vice-Chair and Treasurer**; European Representative, Swedish Association of Directors of Social Services (FSS), Sweden



Georgia Chimbani – **ESN Vice-Chair**; Corporate Director, Health and Adult Social Care, Tower Hamlets Borough, London, United Kingdom



Alfred Grixti – **ESN Vice-Chair**; CEO, Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS), Malta



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



Jukka Lindberg - Association of Directors of Social Services, Finland



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



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



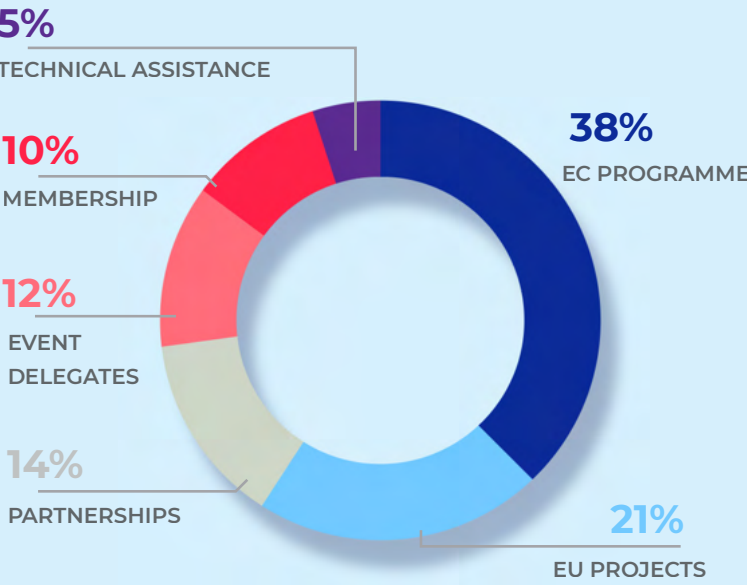
Aðalbjörg Traustadóttir – Head of Office for Disability Policy and Practice, City of Reykjavik – Department of Welfare, Iceland



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

Finance

ESN's financing comes from a variety of sources, including a Framework Partnership Agreement with the European Commission (EC), European action projects, the self-funded **European Social Services Conference** and **European Social Services Awards**, institutional and private partnerships, membership, and technical assistance.



Meet the Secretariat

The Secretariat, led by ESN's Chief Executive Officer, provides strategic, policy, communications, financial, and administrative support to the network.

It also manages the network's relationships with partners, which includes the European Commission, national governments, and private partners.



ALFONSO LARA-MONTERO

Chief Executive Officer



ALVARO SANCHEZ

Finance and HR Manager



CATALINA MARIAN

Executive and Business Support Officer



FRANCESCO CAPUANI

Development Coordinator



CAITLIN RAPH

Membership and Operations Officer



TIM BROHEE

Membership and Operations Officer



INÊS NUNES DE FREITAS

Membership and Project Officer



ARIANNA CICOGNA

Development Assistant



MARTIN LICHT

Senior Policy Officer



ADRIANA MASGRAS

Policy and Project Officer



BEGÜM DERELI

Policy and Project Officer



VESA LATIFI

Project Officer



TÉA ISMAILAI

Junior Policy Officer



STEFANOS MICHELAKAKIS

Junior Projects Officer



EVA FUMAGALLO

Projects Assistant



INGE BOMMEZIJN

External Project Manager



SIMON GIBBONS

Senior Communications Officer



RIOGHNACH HYLAND

Events Officer



JAIME MARTÍN FARELO

Communications and Project Officer



CHRISTINA VARNTOUMIAN

Junior Communications Officer

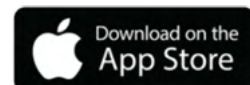


DOROTEA ZWOLINSKI

Communications and Events Assistant

Stay in touch with ESN

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Visit <https://www.esn-eu.org/publications>



ESN 25 Years

2025 marks a momentous milestone for the European Social Network as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of incredible growth and collaboration. From very humble beginnings as a small group of dedicated association directors, we have grown into a thriving network of almost 200 organizations in 33 countries, united by a shared vision and unwavering commitment to making a difference in people's lives.

Reflecting on our journey, I am struck by the extraordinary achievements we have accomplished together. What began as a modest initiative has blossomed into a powerful network, connecting social services organisations across Europe and beyond. Together, we have tackled challenges, inspired innovation, and created lasting impact in the communities we serve.

This milestone is a testament to the power of partnership, network, collaboration and the strength of collective determination. Each step forward has been fuelled by the passion, dedication, and collaboration of our members. Their belief in our mission and their support have been instrumental in shaping our success.

As we celebrate this 25th anniversary, let us look forward with renewed purpose to the many opportunities that will come in the years ahead.

Best wishes,

Alfonso Lara-Montero

Chief Executive Officer
European Social Network

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European Social Network