# Work Package 3 – Good Practices in Crisis Situations

## Feedback with the social institutions on the contents and good practices

European Social Network

June 2024

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# Document Properties

| Outcome No. | | | D3.2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Project Result no. | 3 | **Work Package Title** | Updating the professional skills of social workers for social effectiveness |
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| Reviewer | | | Militant de Savoirs, University of Bolzen Bolzano, University of Nicosia, Innovative Prison Systems, IFRASS, Institute of Public Affairs, Salzburg University of Applied Sciences |
| Name | | | Good Practices in Crisis Situations |
| Date | | | June 2024 |
| Dissemination Level | | | Public |

# Context

SISWEC (Social Work in Crisis Situations) is an Erasmus+ project that assists social workers in improving their crisis intervention skills. The project aims to help social workers address contemporary crises, including natural disasters and socio-economic challenges.

One of the main objectives of the SISWEC project is to create an online training platform to better prepare social workers for crisis intervention. As part of this effort, we have gathered innovative practices from social services developed to respond to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, refugee flows, and mental health issues. This collection of good practices is meant to encourage social services to use them for future crises.

The compilation of good practices is a result of a survey conducted during the identification phase of the research. The questionnaire was designed with the overarching goal of evaluating the current state of social workers' training within their respective countries, while also identifying key knowledge and training gaps essential for effective crisis management. The online survey identified the most pressing issues for social workers across the EU as forced migration, particularly due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, and mental health challenges. These topics emerged as the most urgent areas requiring support and intervention, as highlighted in the ESN questionnaire summary report.

This report aims to support the development of activities and tools for crisis response and to provide a roadmap for potential training programmes for practitioners. It is organized according to the specific contexts in which the programmes and projects were implemented, with sections focusing on the Ukraine crisis, particularly the forced migration caused by the Russian invasion, Covid-19, and mental health. We have identified projects in Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Czech Republic, Malta, and Spain, and we have highlighted two projects from each. These countries were included in the report as they were among those where ESN members who participated in the survey provided examples of the good practices.
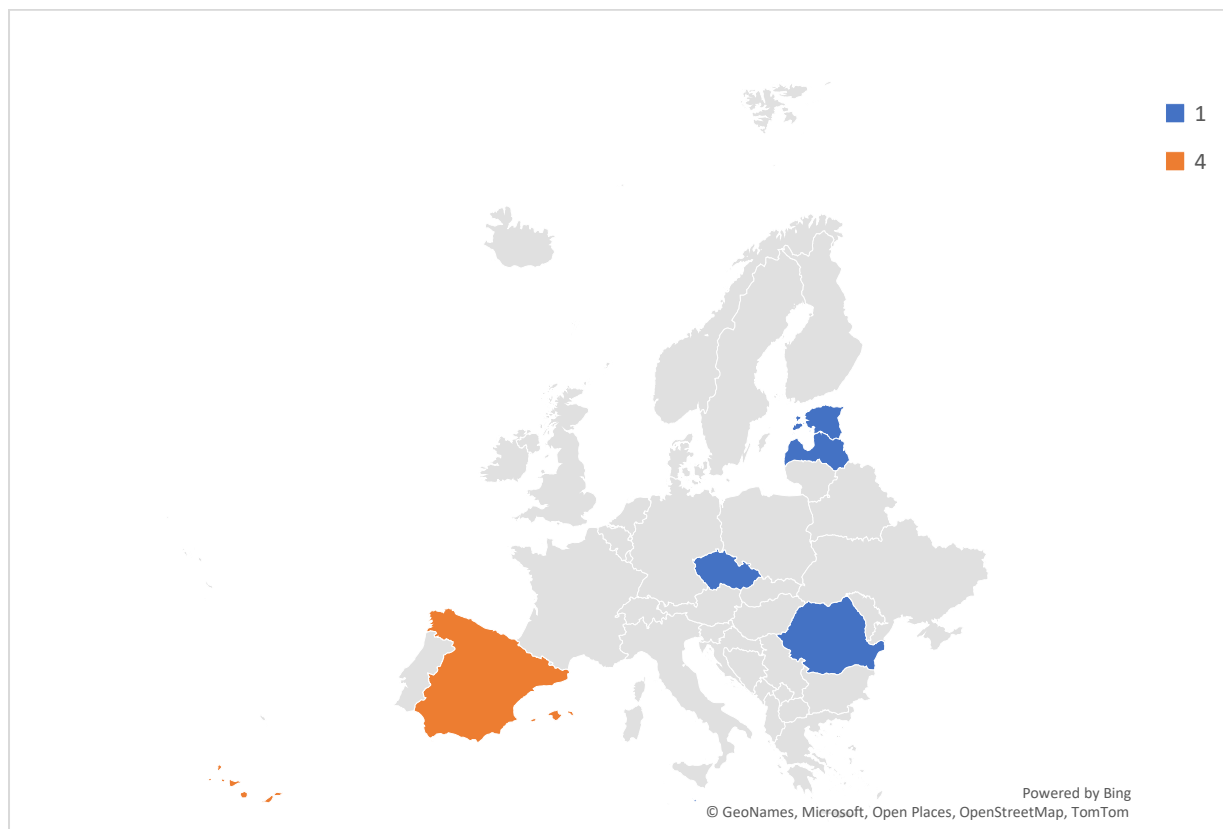
*Figure 1. Projects by Country*

# Ukraine crisis

The crisis in Ukraine caught society and the world by surprise, forcing us to adapt our social services to meet the demands of the Ukrainian people. Those countries whose borders are colliding with Ukraine had to face the first line of response, giving the refugees the care and safety they need.

# Primero Project, Romania

## Context and purpose of the project

Launched in August 2022, PRIMERO[1] is a platform designed to register unaccompanied children. It is coordinated by the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (ANPDCA) and used by the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC). This open-source software facilitates the quick identification, registration, and monitoring of unaccompanied children arriving from Ukraine who may be in transit or temporarily residing in Romania. This tool also enables early detection of

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[1] [Primero Information Management System](#)

potential abuse, neglect, or trafficking situations, ensuring necessary measures are taken to secure and protect the children's rights.

The Primero platform collects data on parents or any adults accompanying children, their temporary or permanent residence in Romania, and their needs, including access to health, education, or social protection services. The initial assessment establishes a risk level, after which children are referred to the appropriate authorities and services according to their needs, such as county directorates for child protection, social assistance directorates, or immigration.

The platform operates at the national level with the support of UNICEF Romania. Children will be identified and registered at the level of the General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection and the SERA Romania Foundation.

Since February 2022, over 1.6 million Ukrainian citizens have entered Romania, including approximately 368,000 children accompanied by their families, other people, or alone. Currently, nearly 37,000 of these children remain in the country, with about 220 Ukrainian children in the special protection system. The PRIMERO platform centralizes information about organized accommodations or communities hosting families with Ukrainian children or Ukrainian children accompanied by adults other than their parents.

Besides identifying and registering Ukrainian refugee children in Romania, the app provides access to essential child protection services, including monitoring and family reunification services, helping the children navigate this traumatic experience.

## Target people

The project targets unaccompanied children from Ukraine.

## Outcomes and impact

In the first 140 days, about 50% of the registrations were made in five counties: Bucharest (17%), Constanta (12%), Vaslui (9%), Iasi (7%), and Maramures (7%). 317 trained social workers and psychologists responsible for identifying and registering children and coordinated by 47 county coordinators are currently using PRIMERO.

In January 2023, 15,480 Ukrainian children were registered in PRIMERO in 41 Romanian counties and the six sectors of Bucharest; social workers from 41 county-level child protection authorities are trained in PRIMERO, and 317 tablets were purchased and distributed to volunteer teams for PRIMERO registration activities.

As of 15 February 2023, 19,726 Ukrainian children had been registered in PRIMERO, and 795 service providers had been trained in child protection.

By the end of May 2023, 27,049 Ukrainian children had been introduced into the PRIMERO app records.

By the end of June 2023, 28,020 Ukrainian children had been introduced into the PRIMERO app records.

The latest updated data is that in February 2023, 19.726 Ukrainian children were registered in PRIMERO, and 795 service providers were trained in child protection.

# Support centre for residents of Ukraine, Latvia

## Context and purpose of the project

In 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine, Europe, and Latvia faced an influx of refugees from the Ukrainian war. Many war refugees arrived in the municipality of Riga, who needed to support basic needs, provide psychosocial assistance, and be involved in solving crises. The Riga City Council decided to create a single Support Centre[2]. This centre will provide support to the refugees of the Ukrainian war. It will unite state and local government institutions and non-governmental organizations to provide support and assistance under one roof. At the beginning of March 2022, the Support Centre was opened.

Before establishing a support centre, the Riga Social Service was crucial in supporting war refugees from Ukraine. Social Services functioned as the primary point of contact for first social assistance. The Support Centre came to unite all the services to give the Ukrainian Refugees the personalized attention they required. The main goal of the Centre was to provide the necessary assistance to all the refugees al in the same place. Therefore, it would be easier for the beneficiaries to access the help.

Ukrainian refugees began to arrive after February 24th in small groups. Then, they began to be accommodated in hostels. In the first two weeks to work with this target group, a team of Social Services social workers was set up to work with the people of Ukraine, which:

The Customer service of the support centre involves certain activities such as:

- Resident Centre of Riga neighbourhoods – ensures registration of persons, provision of information, issuance of SIM card.
- Rīgas satiksme (municipal public transport) – provides distribution of driving cards to residents of Ukraine accommodated in Riga.
- State Fire and Rescue Service – provides accommodation for the people of Ukraine.
- Citizenship and Migration Affairs – ensure the processing of visas and residence permits.

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[2] Riga Support Centre for Ukrainian Residents | Rīgas valstspilsētas pašvaldība

- National Employment Agency - advises on job opportunities, offers accumulated vacancies, helps to apply for unemployment status.
- Riga Social Service- advises on access to social benefits and social services, identifies needs, provides support in solving other problems/needs, attracts resources.
- Municipal education specialists help to apply for a child at a school or kindergarten in Riga.
- At the NGO resource point, in cooperation with the movement "I want to help refugees," volunteers inform about the offers of non-governmental organizations. Volunteers identify human needs—clothes, belongings, legal aid—and contact the appropriate organization. It is clarified whether and when the organization can provide the necessary support; the person is provided with the organization's address and contact details.

## Target people

The project targets citizens from Ukrainian refugees of all ages.

## Outcomes and impact

The most significant advantage of creating a Support Centre in one place was that Ukrainian civilians could complete all the necessary formalities without having to visit different institutions on different premises. The Support Centre was also in the centre of Riga, which was also very important for the availability of support.

In addition, all the social workers and staff involved received an introductory briefing on communication and negotiation, handling non-standard situations, and municipal support for refugees in crisis.

# Ukraine temporary protection, Estonia

## Context and purpose of the project

As of 9 March 2022, a Decree of the Government of the Republic of Estonia entered into force, allowing citizens of Ukraine and their family members who have fled from Ukraine to Estonia to apply for temporary protection[3]. This temporary protection consists of a one-year residence permit that can provide security and social guarantees to Ukrainian citizens and their family members. Once they have applied for temporary protection, war refugees will enjoy rights like those enjoyed by Estonian residents, such as the right to study, work, and, therefore, receive health insurance. Applying for temporary protection is not a sine qua non for living in Estonia; all Ukrainian citizens have the right to stay in Estonia.

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[3] Temporary protection for Ukrainian citizens and their family members - Information on the war in Ukraine - Police and Border Guard Board (politsei.ee)

This temporary protection offers a much faster way to get refugee protection than the tedious inscription for asylum seekers. This temporal protection allows Ukrainian citizens and their family members similar rights to those of Estonian residents, such as access to social services and the right to work and education. It also entails the right of free movement within the European Union. Regarding the right to work, Ukrainian citizens with this type of protection are also allowed to register for unemployment and receive an allowance if they remain unemployed.

The temporary protection ends on March 25, 2025, but Ukrainian citizens can extend it if the war persists.

## Target people

The project targets all citizens from Ukraine who come to live in Estonia.

## Outcomes and impact

The primary outcome of this particular type of protection is the excellent labour market results reported in Estonia. The Foresight Centre finds that more than a third of the refugees from Ukraine have found a job, and 27,000 people have entered the local labour market. Ukrainians with jobs are now about 4% of the Estonian labour force.

It is also worth noting that despite the high cost of supporting Ukrainian citizens, which in 2022 ascended to around 224 million euros, the money spent by refugees has also boosted the Estonian economy. It is estimated that each adult with temporary protection spent around 797 euros on average on goods and services in Estonia.

# Covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic created an entirely new landscape for care services. This crisis forced all countries to strengthen their systems against the clock while the most vulnerable suffered the consequences. The crisis caused by COVID-19 was the most severe in years, and we are not yet out of it. However, this crisis has shown that social services can respond effectively to extreme situations.

# Help Centre, Czech Republic

## Context and purpose of the project

In March 2020, the Czech Republic was hit by the pandemic Covid-19. In two weeks, the Association of Social Services Providers started the COVID-19 Support and Help Centre[4] for social services providers (nursing homes, home care, daily care centres, and others).

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[4] APSS (apsscr.cz)

Without any preparation or funding, the Association had to stop its previous activities towards their members and become a support, help, and foothold for all the social services providers in the Czech Republic. They transformed their organization into an information, distribution, and logistic centre that started providing information, help, issuing guidelines, giving answers daily, and distributing more than 20 tons of PPE (Personal protective equipment), disinfection, and other material help, including iPads, for every nursing home in the country accompanied with a media campaign.

The primary goal was to help and support social services providers immediately—thus, without any external funding or preparation using our resources (human and financial resources).

As secondary goals, they purchased to create guidelines about changing the provision of services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, how to use PPE, and how to change the structure and organization of care.

- To start a HELPDESK that would answer daily emails and telephone calls.
- To start a knowledge and feedback centre for the government and to write the emergency and crisis measures for them to start a distribution and logistics centre to buy, receive, and redistribute PPEs, disinfection, communication devices, etc.
- To start information services daily.
- To start a survey activity that regularly provides the government with feedback and all the data it needs to issue the proper measures.

The strategy to address all the goals is stopping all the running activities and projects, using our human resources for the needed help, addressing funds, companies, foundations, and the public for collecting funds and means to buy PPE and all the necessary equipment, ensuring cars for transportation, and activating the experts needed for creating the knowledge hub.

## Target people

The project targets people of all ages who have been diagnosed with COVID-19. It aims to prepare them with the necessary supplies to face the pandemic.

## Outcomes and impact

The project's most relevant impact was the start of a complete COVID-19 support and help centre and distribution centre for material help and PPEs. These installations were built within days without external funding or preparation.

Another innovation, in a very short time, replaced the state and its activities in providing the needed information, knowledge, and experience and distributing free of charge all the required material helps and PPEs to the social service providers in the Czech Republic.

Distribution of help and material:

In total, the centre for distribution reached the levels of distribution of:

- 470.350 pieces of masks
- 10.000 pieces of respirators
- 5.470 pieces of shields and suits
- 21.575 litres of disinfection gloves
- 35.000 pairs of gloves
- 2000 packages for the staff
- 180 contactless thermometers
- 3.000 POC tests
- 900 iPad

COVID-19 Support and Help Centre:

Regarding the help centre:

- 4860 contacts
- 182 number of newsletters
- eight printed news
- nine guidelines
- 1.521 participants in the training
- 3.039 answers to the surveys

Media campaign:

Related to the media campaign, the online campaign had 1.294.345 views, and the printed newspapers campaign had 2.370.000 readers.

# Case of Sagunto City Council, Spain

## Context and purpose of the project

The Municipality of Sagunto, located in the province of Valencia, Spain, has a population of 68,000 inhabitants. In response to the exceptional circumstances of the State of Alarm, and the challenges affecting teleworking, the municipal Social Services Department was tasked with addressing the social emergencies that emerged across different population sectors. This involved assessing an anticipated increase in needs and utilizing available resources effectively.

The initial action taken by the Social Services Department was to define potential scenarios, draft a report, and propose urgent measures to the mayor's office. This proposal led to the development of what was later termed the Contingency Plan. This plan, which remained in force throughout the State of Alarm, was continually adapted to meet new realities and emerging needs.

Several measures were adopted, including:

- Enabling new processes and procedures.

- Establishing priority intervention scenarios.

- Managing human resources.

- Coordinating protocols.

- Reviewing the global vision of the public system.

- Securing financing for the adopted measures.

In addition to improving and managing existing resources, new initiatives were launched to address the population's needs. One such initiative was the establishment of a home shopping service in collaboration with local businesses and a group of volunteers.

In coordination with the Department of Trade and Markets, the Municipality facilitated contact between shops providing home shopping services and the most vulnerable individuals. This measure proved highly successful for elderly residents, particularly those unfamiliar with online shopping, as they could place orders by telephone. This service, known as Menjar A Casa, was well-received.

Recognizing the limitations of municipal social services in meeting all demands, they also promoted the creation of a volunteer group consisting of 270 residents and colleagues from other municipal departments whose activities were reduced. Their support was crucial; from March 30 to May 26, the volunteers completed 1,113 services.

Sagunto effectively addressed the population's needs and anticipated potential challenges. The main objectives of the response were:

- To ensure comprehensive attention to individuals' needs and their specific situations.

- To mobilize necessary resources, processes, and procedures for a swift and thorough response.

- To reduce vulnerability and the risk of social exclusion arising from the State of Alarm.

## Target people

All adopted measures aimed to assist and support those in need, with a primary focus on the most vulnerable groups. This included older people without support or companionship, families with children, and people with specific needs.

## Outcomes and impact

- Calls answered: 6,321

- Families with intervention and follow-up: 203

- Families referred to the Third Sector: 200

- Telephone calls to vulnerable populations: 6,259

- Volunteer Interventions: 1,113

- Management of other social protection systems: 358

- People assisted through Menjar a Casa: 165 (a 13% increase).

In recognition of its efficiency during the State of Alarm, Sagunto City Council received an award in 2021[5].

# Teleassistance, Council of Barcelona, Spain

## Context and purpose of the project

Barcelona County Council's Local Telecare Service offers people who are at risk due to old age, loneliness, fragility, health, disability, and dependency the possibility of communicating from home, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with professionals prepared to offer help and accompaniment in case of need. During the pandemic, the Local Telecare Service[6], an exceptional service, was activated for all those people over 65 years of age who did not have the service until now and who, given the situation of confinement, could find themselves in a fragile, isolated, or at-risk situation.

The objectives of the system are to detect emergencies and intervene immediately. Also, it aims to provide resources aimed at the user, the families, and the environment from a preventive point of view, focused on promoting active and healthy aging, knowing the community's resources, and making good use of the telecare service.

## Target people

This project targets people over 65 who are either not receiving any assistance or who are receiving assistance but find themselves in a position of loneliness or emergency.

## Outcomes and impact

Of the calls made from the call centre, 198,526 were proactive calls from the Local Telecare Service to find out about users' health and social situation about COVID-19, which has substantially impacted older people.

These figures have led to a sharp increase in the volume of calls received at the care centre in all typologies. In this sense, calls motivated by a health problem have increased

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[5] https://www.elperiodic.com/sagunto/departamento-servicios-sociales-ayuntamiento-sagunto-recibe-reconocimiento-nacional-rapida-tramitacion-ayudas-urgente-necesidad_790636

[6] Informació mesures Covid-19 - Teleasistencia - Diputació de Barcelona (diba.cat)

by 66%, health emergencies by 29%, social emergencies by 37%, and social issues by 9%. It should be remembered that emergencies require mobilizing resources, whether mobile units or external emergency response resources such as the EMS, the Municipal Police, or the Catalan Fire Brigade.

It is also noteworthy the 84% increase in calls classified as "loneliness talks," which corroborates the fact that the Local Telecare Service has been a key player during this crisis and one of the only ones able to respond to the loneliness faced by the elderly, who have suffered so much from the consequences of confinement and the impact of COVID-19.

# Conect-As Project, Asturias, Spain

## Context and purpose of the project

The Conect-As project was originated in the municipality of Parras. During the pandemic and the approval of the minimum living income, people who wanted to apply for this type of benefit or the basic social wage had to do so online.

This online application presented serious problems for the most vulnerable people who did not have the knowledge or the means to do so. COVID-19 aggravated the digital divide, affecting the most vulnerable. Therefore, beneficiaries opted to go to the social workers of reference to ask for help with the processing to access the minimum rent. The workers could not train each person separately, so they created a training course for all of them.

These trainings, which started at the local level, were the seed of what is now known as the Conect-As project. This social and digital inclusion project is developed throughout the Asturias community, offering training to vulnerable people who need training in the use of technology. The key tools of the project to bridge the digital divide are:

- The possibility to participate in training itineraries and/or tutorials on demand.
- A direct support, the Conect-As Voucher that all participants (maximum of 3000) will receive to overcome the access gap.

The voucher amount is 1000 euros, which can be used to buy a laptop, tablet with keyboard, or 2-in-1 convertible computer with Windows 10 operating system or higher and to contract Internet for a maximum period of 12 months.

This project aims to reduce the digital divide by enabling vulnerable people to access benefits online. In particular, this project focuses on the provision of the minimum income.

### Target people

The project is open to individuals receiving a minimum income. It aims to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively interact with administrative services through online platforms.

### Outcomes and impact

The project is currently under evaluation, and the precise impact will not be known until September 2024. To date, approximately 1,654 individuals have subscribed to the project, receiving both the voucher and the training.

Additionally, what initially began as local training has been successfully scaled to the regional level, demonstrating the project's scalability. There is optimism that it can eventually be implemented at the national level.

# Mental health

Mental health has reached a crisis level in recent years. Mental health problems in the population have increased exponentially and force society and services to take this into account. Mental health has become a priority for most governments, and funding on this topic has increased. Therefore, projects aiming to support and aid people with mental health issues have grown. The WHO report on mental health launched in 2022 stated that in 2019, nearly a billion people – including 14% of the world's adolescents – were living with a mental disorder. The mental health crisis is a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, nourishing short- and long-term stresses and undermining the mental health of millions.

# Kellimni Project, Malta

## Context and purpose of the project

The Kellimni project[7] is a helpline for all individuals funded by the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights, and Social Solidarity and led by SOS Malta (Solidarity Overseas Service). The Kellimni platform was set up in 2011 by SOS Malta. The platform followed the guidance of Child Helpline International, an organization gathering 178 members from 146 countries. In the initial phases of the project, the primary target audience of Kellimni was young people, but nowadays, the helpline is available to people of all ages who need support. This project is the country's first mental health support system, including a

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[7] Kellimni.com | Free online support chat with professionals

telephone and online chat. In addition, it is the only support system that works 24 hours a day and 365 days per year, which makes it very accessible for people seeking support.

This Helpline ensures a secure way for any person to communicate and express their feelings or preoccupations and situations they might be suffering from. In other words, this helpline is for anyone looking for psychological and emotional support.

The helpline Kellimni bases all its work on the following principles:

- Promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Individuality and service-user-centredness
- Dignity
- Non-judgment and discrimination
- Choice
- Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality
- Transparency and Accountability

## Target people

In 2019, the project reached 8 843 people, 57.7% of whom were women, 19.7% men, and 22.6% of unknown gender. Most of those seeking support are aged between 25 and 34, followed by those between 18 and 24 and those over 65. Mental health is one of the most discussed issues by beneficiaries (66%). This includes discussions about 'feelings of sadness,' 'fear and anxiety,' 'depression,' and 'loneliness,' followed by 'peer and family relations' (28%) and 'sexuality' (6%).

The CEO of SOS Malta, Claudia Taylor-East, explains that Kellimni is not a money-making machine. It is really geared to support the most vulnerable in our society and to build a stronger, more cohesive, and happier society. The increasing level of financial support the Maltese government provides recognizes Kellimni as the gatekeeper for the services needed by the most vulnerable groups in Malta.

## Outcomes and impact

Kellimni is cost-effective and transferable. Its online nature means that costs can be kept low (as there is no need for physical offices) and that the system can be adapted, developed, and shared with other stakeholders. The Violet software could be shared with online platforms operating in different countries. Critical conditions for a successful transfer to another context would be public financial support, all partners' commitment to providing online support services, and the availability of volunteers and therapists to be involved in the initiative.

The project is working on further developing its online services to better support specific audiences, such as LGBTQI individuals. Kellimni.com is also trying to diversify its services by developing an online video-counselling service and online group sessions, which could enable it to reach a wider audience.

# Respir Project, Spain

## Context and purpose of the project

Respir[8] aims to improve the quality of life of families caring for people with a certain degree of dependency, providing them with time to rest and responding to certain unforeseen family situations.

The Respir Project has three different services. Firstly, temporary residence care. This service aims to improve the quality of life of family carers by providing them with a time out and responding to certain unforeseen family situations.

Secondly, the project offers temporary residence for people with intellectual disabilities who live in a family and are between 6 and 65 years old. The program aims to improve the quality of life of all family members by providing them with time to rest and respond to unforeseen urgent situations.

Thirdly, the Urgent Care Service for the Elderly (SAUV) is a municipal support program that provides the social services of all the town councils in the province of Barcelona with a residential accommodation resource for the temporary accommodation of people over 60 years of age who are in a situation of abandonment, defencelessness or helplessness due to lack of a home or the impossibility of living there. Its purpose is to provide temporary accommodation for older people in a situation of social urgency and requiring immediate action. At the same time, primary care social services look for the resources that best suit their needs.

The Respir project offers family caregivers time to take care of themselves. This break allows them to continue caring for their loved ones without neglecting their health.

## Target people

The Respir program provides temporary residential care for older people and people with intellectual disabilities with a certain degree of dependency.

Regarding temporary residence for older people, it is aimed at families living in the province of Barcelona who are responsible for people over 65 years of age with a certain degree of dependency. Families in this situation can apply for stays in the Respir program for older people.

The Respir program of the Council of Barcelona, in its residential centre modality, is addressed to families living in the province of Barcelona who oversee people with

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[8] Serveis Residencials d'Estades Temporals i Respir - Respir - Diputació de Barcelona

intellectual disabilities between 6 and 65 years old. These families can apply for stays in the Respir program for people with intellectual disabilities.

Regarding the Urgent Care Service, the targeted people are over 60 years old and in a situation of deprotection.

## Outcomes and impact

The RESPIR Project, in its temporary residential care modality for people over the age of 65, provided care to 927 individuals (658 women and 269 men) and recorded 2,442 requests in 2023.

In its modality of temporary residential care for people with intellectual disabilities, the project received 2,297 requests and provided care to 1,474 individuals in 2023 (767 women and 707 men).

Regarding the Urgent Care Service, the program provided residential support to 76 individuals in 2023 (32 women and 44 men).

## SISWEC
skills for social workers

# Strengthening the skills of social workers.