

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



25 Years  
of ESN



### Working Group on Social Services Transformation and Resilience

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This is the Executive Summary of the briefing **Crisis Management Framework for Social Services** published as an output of the 2025 annual meeting of the European Social Network's **Social Services Transformation and Resilience Working Group**.

Read the **full briefing** to find the complete version of the Crisis Management Framework, its components, the rationale behind it, its challenges and the detailed Crisis Management Framework to build resilient social services across Europe.

## 1. Background and Rationale for the Creation of the Framework

Social Services play a very important role in all types of crises, not only in the immediate, but also in the long term. However, they do not have a framework that serves as a guide in times of crisis.

Despite efforts made across Europe at local, regional and national levels and the research carried out in the field of crisis management, very few Member States' social services systems have in place a well-established Crisis Management Framework.

In this context, the creation of a Crisis Management Framework for Social Services becomes essential. Social services have a key role in society as they work with the most vulnerable communities, hence they cannot solely rely on general public preparedness plans. For this reason, ESN's work on the creation of a crisis management framework tailored made for the specific needs of social services is a unique piece of work. Its aim is to propose a crisis management framework that ensures and guarantees the sector will be supported to face and address future crises in the short, mid or long term; before, during, and after those crises take place.

## SOCIAL SERVICES CRISIS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

ESN and the participants of the Working Group Meeting in Tallinn, Estonia, identified challenges around five key main areas. Based on that, the Framework developed by ESN includes five key components, each of which includes a series of measures to adopt at the national, regional and local level, so that social services can be better prepared to address any type of crisis to come.

### 1. Workforce - Leadership and Training

CHALLENGES	PROPOSALS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of systematic learning from crises</li> <li>2. Insufficient anticipation and prevention</li> <li>3. Unclear responsibilities &amp; legal guidance</li> <li>4. Fear of failure and limited crisis management skills</li> <li>5. Lack of cooperation between governing bodies and social services</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop a crisis response toolkit for staff</li> <li>b. Embed adaptative management practices</li> <li>c. Strengthen collaboration between national, regional and local authorities as well as service providers</li> <li>d. Build workforce's emotional resilience through strong support systems</li> <li>e. Strengthen professional capacity through continuous learning and innovation</li> </ol>

### 2. Technology and Information Systems

CHALLENGES	PROPOSALS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fragmented data / no unified registries</li> <li>2. Dependence on electricity and connectivity</li> <li>3. Cybersecurity risks</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Facilitate innovation and learning</li> <li>b. Accelerate digital transformation for crisis preparedness</li> <li>c. Ensure continuity of operations by designing digital systems with offline or low-energy functionality</li> <li>d. Strengthen collaboration through the creation of a single platform to ensure communication across different sectors</li> <li>e. Use data and AI to anticipate needs and act preventively</li> <li>f. Ensure transparency and accountability in the use of technology</li> <li>g. Promote inclusive and human-centred digitalisation</li> <li>h. Invest in the digital skills of professionals</li> </ol>

### 3. Organisational Agility and Interagency Cooperation

CHALLENGES	PROPOSALS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unclear roles in psychosocial support</li> <li>2. Partnerships weaken during long recoveries</li> <li>3. High local expectations with low funding</li> <li>4. Information gaps for citizens and workers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop a clear, flexible and applicable operational framework</li> <li>b. Strengthen durable, multisectoral partnerships</li> <li>c. Strengthen local interagency relationships and post-crisis learning to strengthen partnerships.</li> <li>d. Cooperation with volunteers and external actors</li> <li>e. Enhance digital and communication competencies</li> </ol>

### 4. Systematic Risk and Threat Assessment

CHALLENGES	PROPOSALS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of methodology and shared tools</li> <li>2. Need to shift from individuals to groups</li> <li>3. Limited resources for prioritisation</li> <li>4. Fragmented systems hinder early detection</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Guide the identification of threats and the analysis of vulnerabilities</li> <li>b. Recommend risk management and adaptive strategies</li> <li>c. Establish a flexible and adaptable assessment framework</li> <li>d. Support critical asset mapping</li> <li>e. Enhance Evidence-based Evaluation and Continuous Improvement</li> <li>f. Strengthen coordination platforms and multi-level interaction</li> </ol>

### 5. Transparency and Communication

CHALLENGES	PROPOSALS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limited external transparency</li> <li>2. Low investment in communication</li> <li>3. Lack of inclusive formats</li> <li>4. Time pressure reduces clarity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Position public authorities' communication channels as critical infrastructure for rapid, accurate and inclusive information exchange</li> <li>b. Develop clear communication protocols and guidelines tailored to crisis situations</li> <li>c. Promote multi-channel communication strategies</li> <li>d. Encourage participatory practices</li> </ol>

