



European
Social Services
Conference

European Social Services Conference **2026**
BRIDGING BOUNDARIES
*International Insights into
Social Services*

Valletta, Malta
17-20 May 2026



#ESSC2026





EUROPEAN SOCIAL SERVICES CONFERENCE 2026

The [European Social Services Conference \(ESSC\)](#) is the annual flagship event of the [European Social Network \(ESN\)](#) and is the largest forum for public social policy and practice in Europe. The 34th edition of the European Social Services Conference welcomed more than **950 delegates from 40 countries** and was hosted by Malta's [Foundation of Social Welfare Services](#).

The Conference provides:

- Insights into the social services sector needs, policy developments and practice trends at local, regional, national, and European level;
- Networking opportunities with social service leaders from different organisations and decision makers from national, regional, and local administrations;
- The chance to discover products and solutions to improve public social service quality and delivery.



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's community consists of more than **200 members from 38 countries**, representing millions of social services professionals.

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.

ESSC 2026: A RECORD-BREAKING EDITION

962

Delegates

40

Countries

246

Organisations

9

Keynote
Speakers

133

Presenters

24

Exhibitors

50

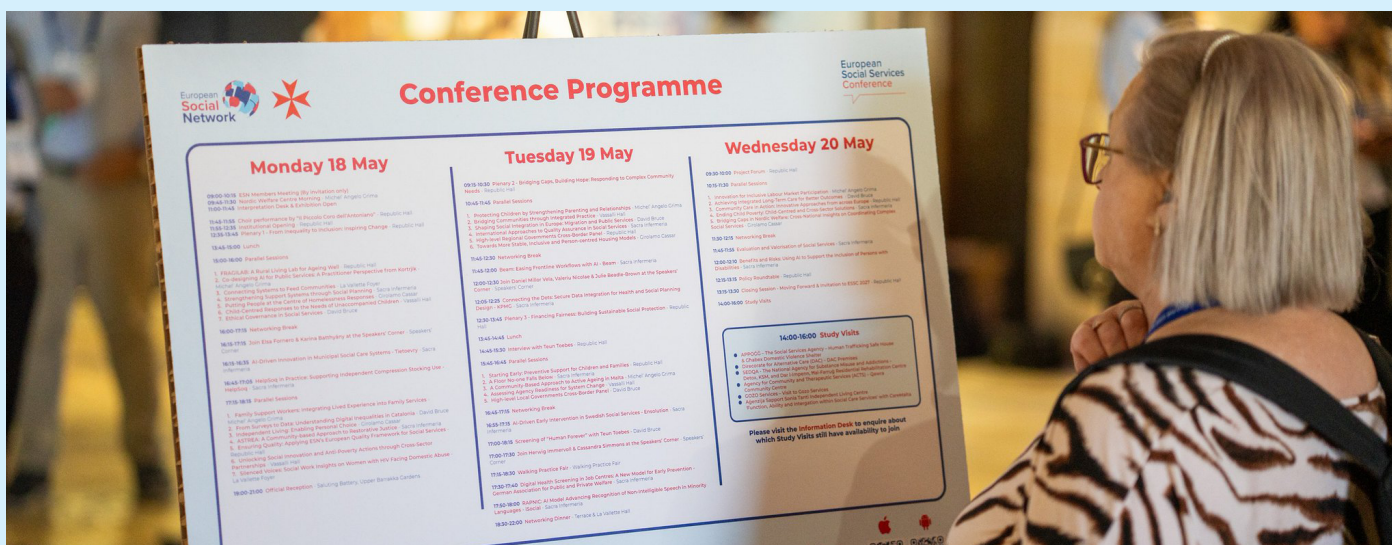
Sessions

23,000

Website Visitors

35,000

Social Media
Impressions



ABOUT THE ESSC 2026 PROGRAMME

The 2026 Conference theme, *Bridging Boundaries, International Insights into Social Services*, focused discussions on how Europe and other parts of the world **design, finance, and deliver systems of public social services that contribute to the resilience of our societies in a time of constant crises.**

The 4-day conference programme consisted of:

- **3 Plenary Sessions**
- **36 Breakout Sessions** in the format of thematic panel discussions, interactive workshops and case study sessions
- **9 Innovation Zone** presentations on specific companies' products and solutions
- **1 Project Forum** with 5 elevator pitch presentations
- **1 Walking Practice Fair** which included **21** social innovation projects
- **6 Study Visits** to social projects in Malta

The Conference technical programme was shaped through a Call for Contributions process, where organisations were invited to submit a proposal to be included in the programme. **110 applications** from **28 countries** were received, resulting in a diverse range of local, regional and national perspectives being represented across the programme.

The Conference plenary sessions were interpreted into five languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. All sessions in the technical programme were interpreted into English, giving presenters the freedom to present in their native language, and delegates from across Europe the opportunity to attend and engage with the topic, encouraging a greater diversity in geographical representation at the Conference.

The main policy takeaways from this year's Conference can be found at the following links:

- [Designing, Delivering, and Financing Social Services: Why the ESSC 2026 comes at a critical moment for Europe](#)
- [Tailoring social services to the needs of the community](#)
- [Building equitable and resilient social services](#)
- [Financing Sustainable Social Services](#)

WHO JOINED US AT ESSC 2026?



ESSC 2026 brought together a truly diverse range of participants, with delegates from **5 different continents** in attendance. While most participants came from across Europe, the Conference also welcomed attendees from **Japan, Singapore, the United States of America, and Uruguay.**

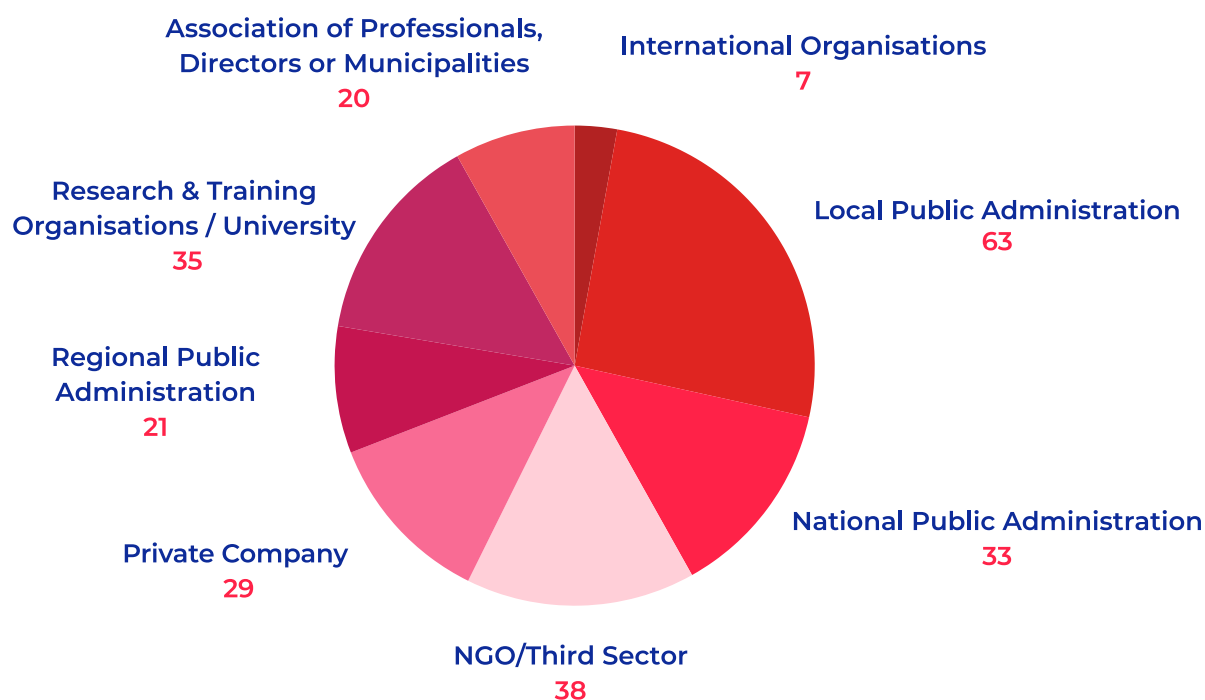
Over the past few years, attendance at the ESSC has steadily increased from **610 delegates in 2022 to more than 950 in 2026.**

The Conference hosts **high-level delegates** from national, regional, and local authorities of the host country, as well as representatives from **European Union institutions** and **international organisations.**

More than two-thirds of all delegates represented **public authorities**, with the **largest proportion (44%) coming from national authorities.**



TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS



Almost half the organisations (**48%**) represented were public authorities, with the highest proportion of these organisations being municipalities or other local authorities (**25%**).



Thank you to our ESSC 2026 Partners



#ESSC2026

ESSC 2026 PARTNERS AND EXHIBITORS

ESN has developed mutually beneficial long-term cooperation with different kinds of entities to pursue excellence and innovation in social services.

Our 2026 Conference partners included IT companies providing government operating systems for social services planning and delivery, tech companies offering AI solutions and case management platforms, as well as care delivery organisations and service providers. Also represented were international consultancies, start-ups active in the sector, research institutions and universities, and NGOs.

ESN annually launches a partnership programme for organisations interested in our policy-focused onsite and online events to showcase their products and solutions and/or organise thematic discussions and interactive sessions.

To learn more, please contact our **Development Coordinator, Francesco Capuani**, by email at francesco.capuani@esn-eu.org to discuss how your organisation can become involved with the **2027 European Social Services Conference**.

2027 European Social Services Conference

COMMUNITIES THAT CARE Systems that Work

Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain
15-18 June 2027



LOOKING AHEAD TO ESSC 2027

Communities that Care, Systems that Work

The 35th edition of the European Social Services Conference will bring together directors, senior professionals, and policymakers to examine and compare how key social services such as child protection and family support, long-term care for people with disabilities and older adults, and social inclusion strategies are structured, financed, and delivered across Europe.

The event will take place in **Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain**, on **15-18 June 2027**, and hosted by the **Regional Government of the Basque Country**. The 2027 Call for Contributions will launch in September, and registrations will open in early November.

With a strong focus on policy and operational practice, this event offers a unique opportunity to:

- Explore the role of the community as a key space for prevention and social and emotional well-being.
- Promote shared social responsibility approaches in care that integrate public administrations, communities, businesses, organisations, and informal networks.
- Analyse the role of public policies as enablers of community networks.
- Identify strategies to reduce barriers to participation and strengthen the sense of belonging within communities, recognising the role of volunteering as an effective means of building connections, trust, and mutual support.
- Reflect on the ethics of care and intergenerational solidarity as principles for sustainable welfare systems.

Designed for decision-makers shaping the future of social services, this Conference will be a forum for critical reflection, peer exchange, and advancing the design and delivery of systems that work to improve the lives of all people in the community.

Visit the [ESSC website](#) to learn more and keep up to date with the latest information.

European Social Services Conference

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 @ESNSocial

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