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Annual Review 2011

Pursuing excellence in social services

 www.esn-eu.org



The European Social Network
is supported by the
European Commission

The European Social Network (ESN) brings together people who are key to the design and delivery of local public social services across Europe to learn from each other and contribute their experience and expertise to building effective social policy and practice. Together with our Members we are determined to provide quality public social services to all and especially to help improve the lives of the most vulnerable in our societies.

Annual Review 2011

Pursuing excellence in social services

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January

Contributed to an EU policy review on age-friendly places in the UK

February

Spoke at the 'Excellence out of Adversity' Conference in Glasgow, organised by ESN member Skills for Care and Development



March

- Participated in the World Disability Symposium in Istanbul
- Joined the European Expert Group on Transition from Institutional to Community Care

April

Contributed to a Brussels consultation meeting on EU cooperation on social protection and inclusion

May

- 120 professionals participated in our Spring Seminar in Budapest on promoting innovation in social services
- Contributed to the Social Innovation Forum at the Committee of the Regions



June

- Published our position on the European Commission's Early School Leaving Recommendation
- Published our policy statement on National Roma Strategies



July

- Over 400 professionals participated in our 19th European Social Services Conference in Warsaw
- Organised ESN Members' Workshop on Europe 2020 Target on Poverty & Social Exclusion in Brighton

August

Month of consolidation and preparation for autumn

September

Launched our Mental Health Report at the European Parliament in Brussels



Highlights of the year 2011

In light of the persistent challenges that social services across Europe are facing, our network has been more active than ever in searching for innovative solutions.

October

- Attended the first Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion in Krakow
- Collaborated with our member in Cluj for the 3rd Romanian Social Services Conference

November

70 delegates participated in our Autumn Seminar 'Investing in Children' in Paris



December

- Organised our first training session on Developing Community Care
- Contributed to a Brussels consultation meeting on child poverty

Letter from
John Halloran
Chief Executive

Dear members and friends of ESN,

In this annual review we look back at our activities and accomplishments in 2011. In light of the persistent challenges that social services across Europe are facing, our network has been more active than ever in searching for innovative solutions, meeting with colleagues to exchange ideas and good practice.

We looked at two major questions at our spring seminar in Budapest – how to make savings through service (re)design and how to promote investment in social services. We organised an autumn seminar in Paris to focus on early childhood and child protection services and their impact on fighting poverty and improving well-being.

In September we launched the report 'Mental Health and Wellbeing in Europe' at the European Parliament, where Nessa Childers MEP hosted a round table on how to make mental health a priority in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

ESN also deepened its work on deinstitutionalisation and set up its first training course to provide delegations from the four Visegrád countries with the skills and know-how to manage the change from institutional to community-based care.

These are just a few highlights of our work together in 2011. I invite you to read on and find out more. Thank you all for your commitment and involvement and I look forward to working with you in 2012.

Best wishes,



John Halloran
Chief Executive



Contents

Policy & Practice

- 6 Innovative Responses for Challenging Times
Spring Seminar
- 8 Investing in Children
Autumn Seminar
- 10 Managing Change: the Role of Public Authorities in Deinstitutionalisation
Training Course
- 12 Mental Health and Wellbeing in Europe: A Person-Centred Community Approach
Launch of ESN's Report at the European Parliament
- 14 Warsaw 2011: Building an Active and Caring Society
European Social Services Conference

Working at EU Level

- 16 Poverty and Social Exclusion: What Role for Social Services?
Policy & Practice Workshop
- 18 Promoting Social Services
EU Policy-Making

Members and Governance

- 22 Building a Stronger Network
New Members
- 24 Sharing Knowledge and Experience
Working with Members
- 26 Overseeing ESN's Growth and Strategy
Governance

Looking Ahead to 2012

- 28 Preview of 2012 Work Programme

Innovative Responses
for Challenging Times
Spring Seminar

120 senior managers, professionals and researchers from Hungary and the rest of Europe came together at ESN's Spring Seminar, organised in Budapest on 17-18 May, under the Hungarian Presidency of the EU. We looked at two questions: how to make savings through service (re)design and how to promote smart investment in social services.

The opening session looked at the varied impact of the crisis in different countries and regions of Europe in terms of public finances and well-being. Among the speakers was Dr Nicolas Scharioth from polling company Gallup Europe, who noted that "the future is more bleak for vulnerable groups" such as large families, older women, and the lesser-educated unemployed. They are among the people likely to need welfare services and benefits, pointing to a further rise in demand during 2012.

The focus of the second plenary was how to make better use of existing resources – a key challenge for social services now. Among the examples, the Municipality of Horsens, Denmark, showed how it had saved around 10% annually by moving citizens with learning disabilities and psychiatric problems from sheltered accommodation with permanent staffing to their own flats with staff on call. Significantly, this contributed to improved self-esteem and independence among service users.

Senior managers are increasingly being asked to make the case for smart investment in social services – two examples of this were shared in the third plenary. A Nordic study on public-private investment in information technology highlighted savings of up to €200 000 per month in staff time in home-care. Meanwhile in Wales, investment

in the skills of front-line managers is anticipated to deliver a better use of resources and more responsive services for people in need.

- The seminar brought out a number of innovative ideas for challenging times:
- looking after and investing in staff who are themselves facing increased strain and dealing with higher and more complex case-loads
 - seeing clients as 'co-producers' of services
 - promoting greater independence and self-reliance as clients may need less help and support than professionals have traditionally thought
 - improving networking among local actors, perhaps especially in regions with very small municipalities
 - exploiting the 'know-how' of front-line professionals to find untapped potential for innovation
 - raising awareness of opportunities for public-private partnerships (PPP) for innovation

ESN will launch a new working group on 'leadership, performance and innovation' in 2012 to take these issues forward.

“Innovation demands leadership. Innovation starts with ourselves. As leaders we have to be willing to take risks...”

Steinar Eggen Kristensen, Director of Social Services, Municipality of Aarhus, Denmark



Impact of the crisis on social services (%)

	0	25	50	75	100
a					
b					
c					
d					
e					
f					
g					
h					

- a Planned capital investments are not being made
- b Staff are facing pay cuts
- c There is less or no recruitment of new staff
- d Some staff have lost their jobs
- e Needs assessment criteria have changed so that fewer people receive services
- f Users are being required to pay more for some services
- g More services are being 'outsourced'/'contracted out' because it costs less
- h More services (that used to be outsourced) are being 'insourced'/provided in house (again) to control costs directly

Diagram shows the impact of the financial crisis on social services budgets. 23 ESN members from 13 countries taking part in the Spring Seminar responded. They were able to tick as many boxes as applied from the list of measures.

ESN survey, May 2011

Papers and presentations are available at www.esn-eu.org/events

Investing in Children Autumn Seminar

ESN's Autumn Seminar explored the relationships between early childhood and child protection services and their contribution to fighting poverty and improving well-being. It was organised in cooperation with ESN Members in France – the Association of Social Directors (ANDASS) and the National Observatory of Children at Risk (ONED).

ESN's Autumn Seminar took place in Paris on 14-15 November, bringing together directors, professionals and researchers in social services to share their knowledge and contribute to forthcoming EU policy guidance on child poverty and wellbeing. In the first session, speakers made the case for investment in high-quality early years services. Prof. Edward Melhuish from Birkbeck College, University of London, showed evidence of the return on investment in the early years.

During the second session, ESN members explored the links between early childcare and specialist child protection services. Patricia Kearney from the Social Care Institute for Excellence, UK, underlined that "every professional working with children has a part to play in child protection." Likewise, Márta Korintus and Ferenc Sidlovics from the National Family and Social Policy Institute in Hungary stressed the importance of cooperation between these services in preventing and identifying risk situations and making referrals to appropriate services as necessary.

In a final round table discussion at the end of the conference, the panel stressed the need to:

- understand the complex set of causes and effects of child poverty
- ensure universal services to identify early on the most vulnerable children who need support and protection

- ensure that early childhood and child protection services enhance children's rights
- improve joint working across services and between levels of government
- better monitor the outcomes of services to know what works best for vulnerable children and families

ESN's contribution to the EU policy on child poverty and wellbeing

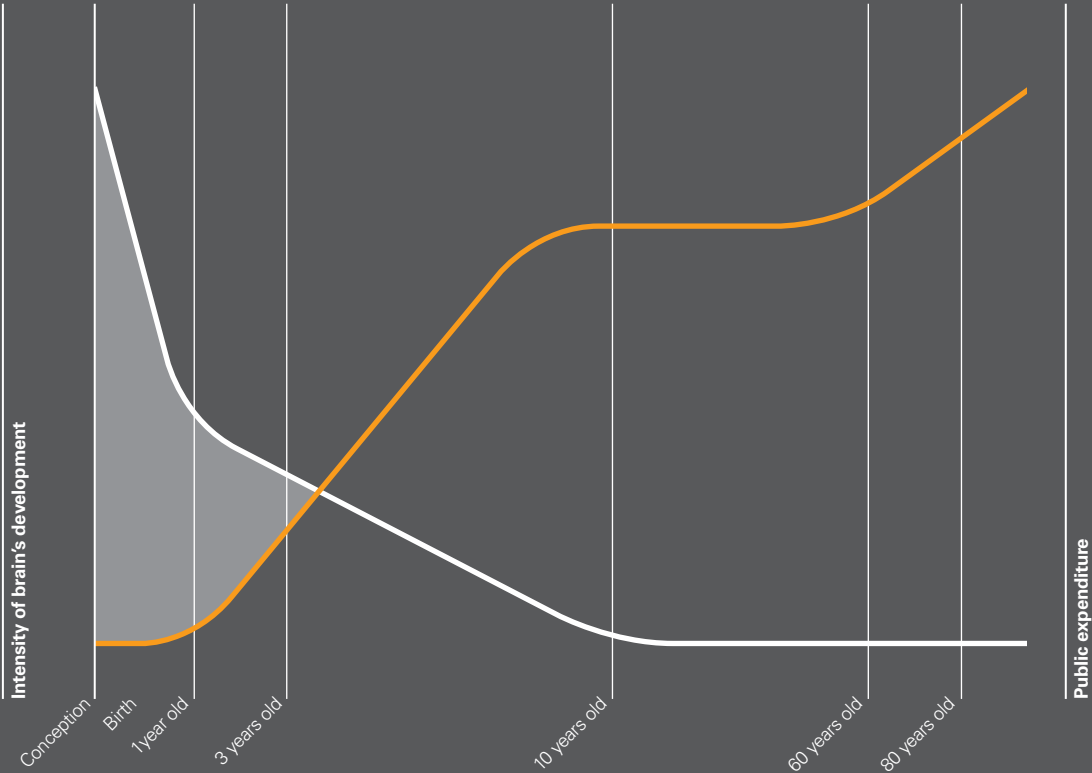
A Social Protection Committee ad hoc group was set up in 2011 to advise the European Commission on the development of a Recommendation on 'Child Poverty and Wellbeing'. ESN was invited to contribute to a consultation to help shape the policy guidance. ESN's Alfonso Lara Montero and Alexis Jay, Chief Social Work Advisor to the Scottish Government, represented ESN and spoke up for social services, in particular child protection, advocating the participation of children in decisions affecting their lives. Drawing on the results of its Autumn Seminar, ESN argued for a preventive approach that would ensure vulnerable children could be identified early and the right support put in place. ESN also stressed that policy-makers should see this as an investment not only in children's life chances but also in future social and economic cohesion.

Papers and presentations are available at www.esn-eu.org/children-and-families



"We need to ensure that universal services identify early the most vulnerable children that need particular support or protection."

Päivi Lindberg, National Institute for Health and Welfare, Finland



Mismatch between opportunity and investment in the early years

Jacques van der Gaag, an economist, shows in this diagram that there is a mismatch between opportunity and investment. Public expenditures are lowest in the early years (white curve), when the brain has the highest potential for change (orange curve)

Adapted from Van der Gaag, 2004, The Benefits of Early Child Development Programs: An Economic Analysis. Cited by Prof E. Melhuish at ESN Autumn Seminar

- Brain growth and maximum potential for change
- Spending in Health, Education, Income Support, Social Services and Crime
- Missed opportunity for investment



Managing Change: the Role of Public Authorities in Deinstitutionalisation Training Course

ESN launched its first training course to support the transition from institutional to community-based care, bringing together representatives of different levels of government and service providers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The course is being run in cooperation with the Tizard Centre at the University of Kent, UK.

“People with learning disabilities are not different. We are like everyone else. We can learn new skills.”

Andrew Walker, User of Southdown Services

“We are here to learn, we need to create new services and train our staff to be able to work in a new environment.”

Miklós Szentkatolnay, Public Foundation for Equal Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities, Hungary



Managing Change



- Build capacity to change and improve
- Agree strategic direction
- Engage and communicate
- Adapt leadership to suit new environments

Diagram shows the circle of key actions to be taken by leaders in social services in order to manage change in service design and delivery

Guide to Leadership – Taking a closer look at leadership in social work services (2010), study commissioned by the Scottish Government from the Social Work Inspection Agency, available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/09/02163616/2>

The course aims to identify the principles, values and skills necessary to develop modern community-based services and to support the closure of large institutions. It provides participants with expertise in strategic planning and operational service management that will enable them to analyse their own services and develop strategies for deinstitutionalisation.

The first training session took place in Brighton in November and opened with a discussion about what is meant by deinstitutionalisation. Julie-Beadle Brown, Lecturer on Learning Disabilities at the Tizard Centre, said that it is about a philosophy of care which places the individual at the heart of all interactions and prevents their social exclusion.

Deinstitutionalisation is at different stages in each of the four participating countries:

- The Czech Republic was the first to launch a national reform and its Centre for Transformation of Social Services now runs a country-wide programme for the gradual closure of institutions.
- The Slovak government has just announced a national strategy which will utilise EU Structural Funds to create a new community care infrastructure and train the workforce.
- In Hungary, the government adopted a strategy in the summer of 2011, but the



current economic situation is hampering implementation.

- Poland currently has no clear national strategy to promote community-based alternatives.

To see what community care looks like in reality, participants visited eight sheltered flats in the Brighton area, provided by the Southdown Housing Association under contract from Brighton & Hove City Council. They later heard from experts from Italy (Lorenzo Rampazzo, Veneto Region) and Slovenia (Davor Dominkus, Ministry of Social Affairs) who shared their experience of and commitment to deinstitutionalisation and alerted the groups to some of the persistent challenges of deinstitutionalisation:

- removing the stigma of mental health and disability
- shifting resources from hospitals to the community
- ensuring community services are well-coordinated
- promoting a focus on rehabilitation to enable people to live independently

The course continues in 2012.

You can find more information on this topic at www.esn-eu.org/towards-community-care

Mental Health and Wellbeing in Europe: A Person-Centred Community Approach Launch of ESN's Report at the European Parliament

On 21 September 2011 ESN launched the report of its working group on mental health and wellbeing at an event hosted by Irish MEP Nessa Childers. The event brought together delegates from across Europe, including service managers, professionals, researchers and service users, in a joint effort to advocate better mental health services.

The first session explored the benefits of a person-centred approach to recovery and examined the role of health and social services. Marianne Cohen from Recovery DK, Aarhus, Denmark recalled that up to 50% of people with mental health problems can achieve a 'social recovery'. The Municipality of Aarhus is developing mental health services based on four core values:

- a focus on the individual, not their illness
- the individual's right to full partnership
- the individual's right to choose
- the individual's potential for development

Speakers agreed that to achieve the Europe 2020 targets it would be necessary to invest in personalised mental health services to meet the needs of particular groups. Dr Dainius Puras, a former member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, lamented that children and young people "have been mostly invisible when it comes to mental health policies, particularly in new(er) Member States."

Dr Anja Baumann from WHO Europe shared her concerns about the prevalence of poor mental health in the rapidly increasing elderly population. In her view, mental health policies for this group would have to be strengthened and older people would need to be closely involved.

The mental health of the working population was brought into the discussion by Dr Paul Litchfield from the World Economic Forum's Workplace 'Wellness Alliance'. He emphasised the costs of not investing in mental health and argued that workplace wellbeing strategies can produce significant savings.

The voice of users was represented among others by Lise Jul Pedersen from the Danish Users' Movement: "Users need to be able to actively decide their path to recovery, even if this means that they make their own mistakes along the way."



Find out more about mental health and wellbeing, including the recovery approach, in ESN's report at www.esn-eu.org/publications-and-statements



"Investment in community-based mental health services is key to reaching the Europe 2020 targets."

Nessa Childers MEP

Warsaw 2011: Building an Active and Caring Society European Social Services Conference

The network's flagship event attracts over 400 participants every year. It is an excellent learning and networking opportunity for everyone in the field. The 19th European Social Services Conference took place in Warsaw on 6-8 July in cooperation with the Polish EU Presidency.

The headline of this year's conference was 'Building an Active and Caring Society'. Among the questions tackled through the four plenary sessions and 24 workshops were issues such as getting the balance right between caring for vulnerable people and helping them to be 'active' and how social services should adapt to the current economic crisis.

A plenary session based on ESN's report 'Contracting for Quality' explored how the formal or informal contracts between different organisations can help build continuous improvements in long-term care services. When asked to define quality care, Elisabeth Mestheneos from AGE Platform Europe said: "For users and carers alike, it's difficult to describe quality, but they know it when they see it, or rather feel it."

The plenary session on developing community care strongly advocated person-centred community-based services from an economic, professional and ethical point of view. The key to the economic case is to look at cost-effectiveness rather than just cost, argued Prof. Martin Knapp of the London School of Economics.

The 24 workshops addressed a wide range of themes, from collaborative and integrated service delivery in a high-tech world to supporting the integration of young people from minority groups. The final round table, chaired by EU social inclusion expert Hugh Frazer, explored the political and managerial responses to the economic crisis. In the view of Virginia Brás Gomes, "it's not just about doing more with less, but doing what is right with less."

 To register for this year's conference on 'Sustainable Social Services' in Copenhagen on 25-27 June, please visit www.esn-conference.org

Warsaw 2011 European Social Services Conference



"The best social aid is to make people self-reliant and make them part of the local community, which will play an essential role in helping them."

Andrew Urushadze, Minister for Labour, Health and Social Affairs, Georgia



Poverty and Social Exclusion: What Role for Social Services? Policy & Practice Workshop

The European Union has set a target of having “at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion” by 2020. ESN Members met together in the summer to re-evaluate the role of social services and review national policy-making in this area. Senior managers in local and regional social services from Belgium, Germany, Iceland, Romania, Serbia, Spain and Sweden were joined by several national and European policy experts.

The workshop addressed the following key questions about the role of social services in helping achieve the Europe 2020 target:

- How would you define/measure poverty and social exclusion?
- What role do social services in local government have in tackling poverty?
- What would it take to reduce poverty in your area significantly?
- What is your view on what your country’s National Reform Programme says about combating poverty and social exclusion?

“You have to keep trying even when some families reject the offer of help – that’s what social work is about.”

Matthias Schulze-Böing, National Association of Job Centres, Germany

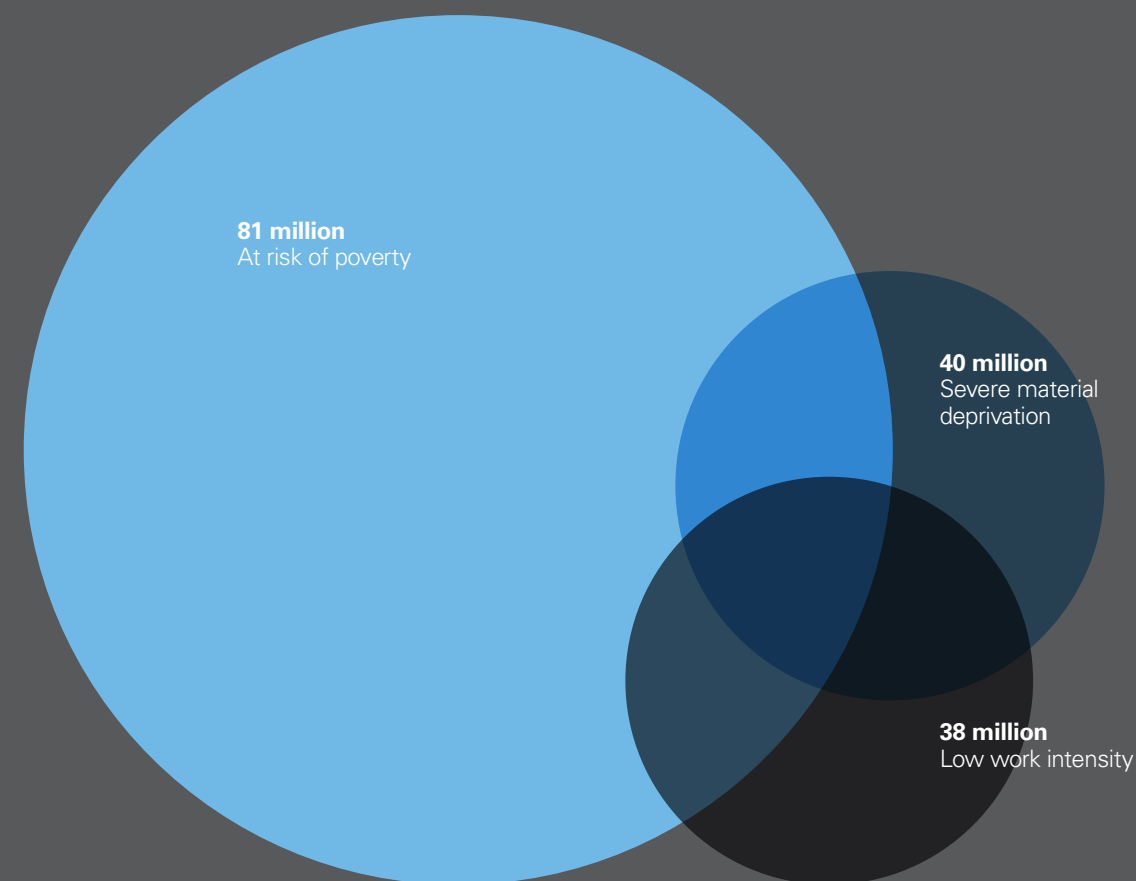


The full workshop report is available at www.esn-eu.org/publications-and-statements

In terms of defining poverty, ESN Members are more used to working with thresholds for welfare benefits based on individual/household income, than with the relative income poverty measure as used by the EU. In terms of service provision, they are used to working with people who have particular problems in their life, e.g. long-term unemployment linked to poor mental health, low self-esteem, low educational attainment and addiction.

ESN Members at this workshop saw the role of social services as helping vulnerable people overcome social and personal problems through both services and benefits, thus helping them to access education and employment. When looking at the National Reform Programmes, they found it regrettable that the policy links between these issues were not more prominent. Much is already being done by specialist social work services to help families in difficulty overcome or manage challenging life circumstances, but several areas were identified as requiring greater investment and policy development in order to combat poverty and social exclusion. These were:

- education and social inclusion for all children
- comprehensive early intervention programmes
- personalised pathways to education and work for vulnerable individuals
- adequate social benefits
- better access to European funds



Measuring poverty and social exclusion in the EU

There is a significant overlap of people who are ‘poor’ by all three EU measures as follows:

- relative income poverty: the percentage of people living in households with an income below 60% of the national median
- severe material deprivation: the proportion of people who cannot afford four of nine items, including utility bills, an unexpected expense, a car, a phone
- households with very low work intensity: the proportion of people below 60 who live in households where the adults worked less than 20% of their total work-time potential during the previous 12 months

Eurostat Europe 2020 Indicators (2010), Full data online at: ec.europa.eu/europe2020

Promoting Social Services EU Policy-Making

Peer Review

UK: A good place to grow older

In January, ESN's Stephen Barnett and ESN member Reinhard Pohlmann from the City of Dortmund, Germany, contributed to a peer review in London. It was organised by the UK government to help review its policy of encouraging local authorities and communities to make their area a 'good place to grow older'. In one of the local examples presented, the City of Manchester, a WHO age-friendly city, reported that older people's top three issues are community safety, transport, and the physical environment. ESN stressed the importance of reaching out to older people to find out what their real concerns were and to involve them in all aspects of planning, from spatial design to social care.

Peer Review

Ireland: setting national poverty targets

In June, ESN was invited to contribute to a second peer review, this time in Ireland, about measurements and settings on poverty. Ireland's targets have been based on the national poverty indicator called 'consistent poverty', which is the number of people at risk of poverty and experiencing material deprivation for two out of three years. ESN's Dorota Tomalak drew participants' attention to the multidimensionality of poverty: "It should be tackled through a life-cycle approach where local



“Some governments are walking a tightrope in their efforts to reduce spending without sacrificing growth and people’s well-being.”

László Andor, European Commissioner
for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

public social services have a key role, coordinating action locally and addressing all underlying causes of social exclusion.”

The European Expert Group on the Transition to Community Care

ESN became a member of the European Expert Group on Transition to Community Care in March 2011. The group advises the European Commission on the use of Structural Funds for 'community care development'. At EU level, it is a strong voice speaking out against large outdated institutions for children and older people, people with disabilities or mental health problems. It will draft a set of guidelines in 2012 to help decision-makers and practitioners understand the process of deinstitutionalisation and the values of community care. ESN has emphasised the democratic accountability and political leadership of local and regional authorities and advocated a leading role for them in strategic planning and coordination between actors.

ESN's response to the EU Strategy to reduce Early School Leaving

One of the headlines of the EU2020 strategy is to reduce the rate of early school leavers to less than 10% Europe-wide. In order to support Member States in reaching this target, the European Commission adopted in January a communication outlining the main causes and risks of early school leaving,

Promoting Social Services EU Policy-Making continued

as well as the existing and forthcoming EU-level measures to tackle it. ESN called on Member States to take additional measures to ensure that children with the highest welfare needs (due to disability, neglect, abuse or asylum status, and all those in alternative care) also benefit from the Commission's proposals, highlighting the positive role of local specialist child welfare and protection services.

ESN's Position on the National Roma Integration Strategies

EU Member States made a commitment in 2011 to deliver annual policy updates on Roma integration. ESN wrote to the responsible national ministers and officials in June 2011 to call for local and regional authorities' participation in the design and delivery of the strategies and to urge policy-makers to pay particular attention to the situation of vulnerable Roma children.

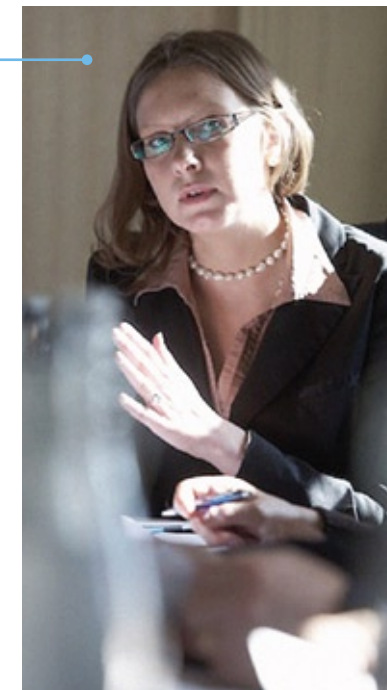
ESN's Position on the European Innovation Partnership for Active and Healthy Ageing

The EU launched this initiative to promote technological innovation in meeting the challenges and opportunities of an ageing Europe. ESN called for the greater recognition of local authorities in shaping their local area in terms of planning and provision of public services, transport and accessibility, to improve the health and quality of life of older people. The consultation response also



“Poverty should be tackled through a life-cycle approach where local public social services have a key role, coordinating action locally and addressing all underlying causes of social exclusion.”

Dorota Tomalak, ESN



featured examples of innovation from ESN Members in Aarhus (Denmark), Dublin (Ireland) and Varna (Bulgaria).

Local Strategies to Combat Homelessness HABITACT, FEANTSA and the Committee of the Regions, 17 June

HABITACT, the European exchange forum on local homeless strategies, has an agreement with ESN for its members to join in HABITACT activities. In June ESN members Eloi Mayordomo i Martinez from the Province of Barcelona, Spain, Carlos Santos Guerrero from the Autonomous Community of Galicia, Spain, and Elisabeth Rahmberg from FSS, Sweden, attended a European seminar about governance of homeless services in Brussels, hosted by the Committee of the Regions. The seminar sought to compare and contrast different models (in-house, partnership, market regulation),

but it became apparent that most local authorities operate a mixture of all three models in parallel. It was also clear that the homeless services were seen as part of the wider municipal responsibility for social services.

European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion Annual Convention, 17-18 October

ESN attended the first Annual Convention of the new Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion in Krakow, Poland, where many stakeholders came together to discuss how progress could be made towards the Europe 2020 target, even in the difficult economic circumstances. László Andor, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, recognised how the crisis could endanger progress: “Some governments are walking a tightrope in their efforts to reduce spending without sacrificing growth and people's well-being.”

Faroe Islands

Gigni, National Institution for Public Health for Families, Children and Youth

Sweden

Gryning Vård, Sweden's largest Public Company in the Social Security Sector

United Kingdom

National Homecare Council

France

National Observatory of Children at Risk (ONED)

Belgium

Federal Public Service for Social Integration (FPS SI)

Austria

City of Vienna, Department for Health Care and Social Welfare Planning

Switzerland

Swiss Conference for Social Welfare (SKOS)

Italy

Department of Social Services of Nuoro

Turkey

Municipality of Istanbul, Department of Social Services

Spain

Ministry for Equality and Social Welfare of the Regional Government of Andalucia

Italy

Social Services of Bolzano

Georgia

Social Service Agency

Building a Stronger Network

In 2011, ESN welcomed 12 new national and regional members. With the recent expansion, the network now includes associations of directors of public social services, national, regional and local authorities and agencies, research institutions, cities and municipalities in 28 countries.

Sharing Knowledge and Experience

Working with Members

Helping our members change the lives of the most vulnerable in our societies is at the core of ESN's mission. We support members in the development of quality social services by offering them opportunities to draw on each other's knowledge and experience.

Romanian Social Services Conference

Cluj, Romania, 10-11 October

For the third consecutive year the Municipality of Cluj hosted the Romanian Social Services Conference in collaboration with ESN. The conference attracted around 100 delegates from all over Romania. Under the theme 'Building Better Social Services by Working Together', the conference explored how improved cooperation can be more cost-effective and deliver better outcomes for citizens. ESN experts from Belgium (Christian Fillet, WVOS), the United Kingdom (Philip Cotterill, ADASS), Hungary (Tamás Spiesz, National Family & Social Policy Institute), Norway (Birgit Sannes, NHV) and Ireland (Maura Morgan, HSE) shared their expertise on areas including the benefits of technology and community care for people with disabilities.

Skills for Care and Development Conference

Glasgow, UK, 1-2 February

ESN's CEO John Halloran spoke at the plenary session of the conference on innovative ways of supporting the health and social care workforce organised by ESN Member, Skills for Care and Development. The conference, entitled 'Excellence out of Adversity', was the third international conference focusing on the skills of the health and social care workforce. The latest research findings and clinical applications of evidence-based



practice were presented. John Halloran emphasised the need to strengthen management and leadership capacity throughout the sector.

Social Services for Vulnerable People

Poltava, Ukraine, 6-7 October

A delegation of ESN experts was invited to a seminar organised by the Ukrainian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy under the EU's Neighbourhood Policy. The seminar set out to identify the problems of vulnerable groups, to present different models of

service delivery in the EU and to identify ways forward for social services in Ukraine. ESN Members from the Scottish Government (Alexis Jay), Ireland's Children's Acts Advisory Board (Aidan Browne) and the Hungarian Institute of Family and Social Policy (Ágnes Simonyi) presented different models of service delivery and identified ways forward for social services on the ground.

First National Social Services Conference

Prishtina, Kosovo, 17 November

Ágnes Simonyi from the Hungarian National Family and Social Policy Institute was in Kosovo representing ESN at the country's first national conference on social services. The event was co-organised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and a social services development project financed by the UK government. A member of ESN's high level advisory committee on developing community care, Ágnes Simonyi was invited to give a presentation on experiences of decentralisation in social services.

Gerontology Centre of Subotica, Serbia

Serbian ESN Members visit UK
ESN's John Halloran visited the Subotica Gerontology Centre and officially opened the new community centre for older people. This was in response to an invitation from Director Nenad Ivanisevic, who had visited the ESN Secretariat and Brighton &



Hove City Council in November the previous year. Ivanisevic and five colleagues from the Subotica Gerontology Centre were given a tour of the city's Craven Vale service for adult social care by Councillor Ken Norman.

Conference on 'Models of Foster Care'

Zagreb, Croatia, 26 October

ESN members from France and the UK contributed to the conference organised by the Croatian Ministry of Health and Welfare, UNICEF and the Forum for Quality Foster Care of Children. The conference followed the adoption of the new Foster Care Act in Croatia in July 2011, which introduced a number of changes to foster care practice. Vincent Ramon from the National Observatory on Child Protection (ONED) in France and Alexis Jay, Chief Social Work Advisor to the Scottish government, shared experiences from their own countries.

World Disability Symposium

Istanbul, Turkey, 4-6 March

ESN participated in the World Disability Symposium that took place in Istanbul on 4-6 March, organised with the support of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ESN's Policy Officer Alfonso Lara Montero was one of the presenters on the 'Rehabilitation' Panel, discussing the UN Programme for Action for People with Disabilities. ESN also established relations with the City of Istanbul, which joined the network shortly afterwards.

Overseeing ESN's Growth and Strategy Governance

The Annual General Meeting of ESN took place prior to the annual conference in Warsaw and was attended by a large number of members. The AGM was addressed by the Chair Lars-Göran Jansson and previous Treasurer Christian Fillet, together with the CEO John Halloran who presented a review of the previous year. The annual accounts were available for members' attention.

The ESN secretariat increased its capacity to respond to the growing activity and membership over recent years with the creation of two new posts: a policy and information assistant and an ICT/data assistant. In 2011, all staff took part in training in EU law with regard to employment and equality. ESN considers itself an equal opportunities employer, promoting an ethical workforce culture of transparency, sensitivity and fairness for all.



You can find more information on this topic at www.esn-eu.org/who-we-are

“The Board of ESN is committed to supporting our colleagues in Central and Eastern Europe to develop effective community care services.”

Lars-Göran Jansson, Chair, ESN



Business Committee

Seated, from left to right

John Halloran, Chief Executive

Lars-Göran Jansson, Chair

Christian Fillet, Vice Chair

Martial Milaret, Treasurer

Board Representatives in Warsaw

Back row, from left to right

Aldo Forte, Lazio Region, Italy

Ernst Schedler, Switzerland

Luc Kupers, Flanders, Belgium

Philip Cotterill, England, UK

Lotta Persson, Sweden

Harri Jokiranta, Finland

Miran Kerin, Slovenia

Simone Giotto, Veneto Region, Italy

Preview of 2012
Work Programme

In 2012 ESN will continue its work across a range of themes to support its members in facing immediate and long-term challenges. ESN will organise opportunities for exchange and learning based on local practice examples and will make a practice-based contribution to EU policy development. ESN will also help its members stay informed about EU legislation and policies affecting social services.

“We would like to thank Jeta Bejtullahu and Dorota Tomalak of the Secretariat for their service to ESN in the last few years and wish them well for the future.”

Developing Community Care
Training course

The ‘Managing Change’ training course will continue with the participation of 16 senior managers and decision-makers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The two sessions in 2012 will allow the national/regional teams to present and receive feedback on their plans for developing community care. ESN will continue to promote deinstitutionalisation alongside other European networks through the Expert Group on Transition to Community Care.

EC Recommendation
on Child Poverty
EU Advocacy

Following the Autumn Seminar in 2011 on ‘Investing in Children’, ESN will continue its advocacy for the most vulnerable children to be taken into account by the European Commission’s Recommendation on Child Poverty. A good practice paper and a position paper will be published early in the year and the Copenhagen 2012 conference will feature workshops on the topic.

Leadership, Performance,
Innovation

New Policy & Practice Group

ESN is launching a new working group on ‘Leadership, Performance and Innovation: Improving Lives in a Changing World’. Nine senior managers from across Europe will review and further develop social services’ response to the crisis, drawing on approaches that improve efficiency and effectiveness, including examples presented at ESN’s Copenhagen 2012 conference.

Spring Seminar

Vulnerable Youth in Transition

ESN’s Spring Seminar will take place in Rome on 10-11 May, and will look at the situation of vulnerable young people in transition. The focus will be on two groups of particular concern to social services: young people leaving care (whether in an institution or a foster family) and early school-leavers.

Sustainable Social Services
European Social Services
Conference

In the face of current demographic and financial pressures, people in social services remain passionate about helping vulnerable citizens improve their quality of life. Over 400 colleagues from more than 30 countries will gather in Copenhagen on 25-27 June for three days of plenary debate, workshop exchange and networking on how to make social services more sustainable in today’s Europe.

Independence in Later Life
Autumn Seminar

The theme of our Autumn Seminar is ‘Maintaining and Regaining Independence and Inclusion in Later Life: the Role of Social Services’. In the European Year of Active Ageing, the event will highlight practices that help older people stay independent, healthy and active for longer, with a particular accent on prevention and rehabilitation.

Poverty & Social Exclusion
EU Advocacy

ESN will speak up for the role of social services in helping people manage and overcome challenges that lead to social exclusion. ESN will inform its members about EU and national policy-making under the Europe 2020 Strategy and participate in the EU Stakeholders Group of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion. Under this heading, ESN will link its work to policies on social innovation, active inclusion and homelessness.

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Progress programme was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

- To that effect, Progress aims to:
- provide analysis and policy advice on employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
 - monitor and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
 - promote policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
 - relay the views of the stakeholders and society at large. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/>

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

 www.esn-eu.org