



**European
Social
Network**

Social Services
in Europe

Annual Review 2012

Investing 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 design, manage and deliver social services in public authorities across Europe. We support the development of effective social policy and social care practice through the exchange of knowledge and experience.

Annual Review 2012

Investing in social services

 www.esn-eu.org

- Attended the opening conference of the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations

January

- Launched a new working group on 'Leadership, Performance, Innovation'
- Became a member of the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care

February

- ESN members participated in a HABITACT peer review in Ghent on fighting homelessness
- Held the second session of the 'Managing Change in Community Care' training programme in Prague
- Published a position paper on the EU Recommendation on child poverty and wellbeing

March

- Published the 'Developing Community Care' report
- Participated in the Danish Presidency Conference 'Youth Employment and Inclusion in Times of Crisis'

April



- Held ESN's Spring Seminar on 'Vulnerable Youth in Transition' in Rome

May

- The 20th European Social Services Conference on 'Shaping the Future for Sustainable Social Services' took place in Copenhagen
- Published an assessment of the National Reform Programmes

June

- Published a response to a Commission consultation on personal and household services

July

- Held the final training session of the 'Managing Change in Community Care' training programme in London
- Visited the Paralympic Games together with the 'Managing Change' training group, ESN High Level Advisory Committee and Business Committee
- Published a review of the active inclusion policies in the last four years

August

- Published an analysis of the Social Protection Committee's report on fighting child poverty
- Contributed to a de-institutionalisation seminar in Warsaw

September

- Held ESN's Autumn Seminar on 'Retaining and Regaining Independence and Inclusion in Later Life' in Stuttgart
- Contributed to the IBM International Social Sector Forum in Warsaw
- Attended the Cyprus Presidency Conference 'Investing in Children'

October

- Contributed to the OECD Expert Consultation on 'Integrated Services' in Paris

November



- Participated in the Annual Convention on Poverty and Social Exclusion in Brussels
- Contributed to a de-institutionalisation seminar in Bratislava

December

Highlights of the year

2012 has been a successful and active year which helped strengthen our growing and diverse network in challenging times for many colleagues.

Letter from
John Halloran
Chief Executive

Dear members and friends of ESN,

2012 has been a successful and active year which helped strengthen our growing and diverse network. It was nevertheless a challenging year for many colleagues struggling to deliver social services in difficult financial circumstances. ESN's work programme covered a wide range of themes that proved to be key issues for many of you.

We started the year with the launch of a new working group on 'Leadership, Performance, Innovation' to look more closely at the impact of the crisis on managing social services. While starting a new project, we concluded another – we held the final sessions of our 'Managing Change' training programme which helped a group of policy makers in the Visegrád countries to develop effective strategies for de-institutionalisation. We also published a report on 'Developing Community Care' which we will continue to promote as a tool to support this important transition.

Our spring seminar in Rome focused on vulnerable youth in transition from a twofold perspective: care and support into adulthood, and early school leaving. With the autumn seminar held in Stuttgart, we looked at investing in independence and inclusion in later life in the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.

I am grateful to all of you for your commitment and involvement in 2012 and I look forward to working together in the year ahead. ESN will continue to provide members with opportunities for networking, mutual learning, and policy and practice development throughout 2013. Find out more in the last section of our report.

Best wishes,



John Halloran
Chief Executive



Contents

Policy & Practice

- 6 Leadership, Performance, Innovation
Working Group
- 8 Vulnerable Youth in Transition
Spring Seminar
- 10 Managing Change in Community Care
Training Course
- 12 Retaining and Regaining Independence and Inclusion in Later Life
Autumn Seminar
- 14 Copenhagen 2012: Shaping the Future for Sustainable Social Services
20th European Social Services Conference

Working at EU Level

- 16 Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion through Social Services
Influencing Policy
- 18 Investing in Children and Promoting Wellbeing
Influencing Policy
- 20 Promoting Social Services
EU Policy Making

Members and Governance

- 24 A Growing and Diverse Network
New Members
- 26 Sharing Knowledge and Experience
Working with Members
- 28 Managing in Challenging Times
Governance

Looking Ahead to 2013

- 30 London Paralympic Games
Inspire a Generation
- 32 From Social Protection to Social Investment?
EU and ESN Priorities in 2013

Leadership, Performance, Innovation Working Group

ESN set up a working group on service management to assess the impact of and responses to the crisis in social services. In 2012 the group looked at several case studies on the crisis, discussed the contribution of public service leadership and management, and held a special session on evidence-based practice.

This group of senior managers has both strategic and operational responsibilities in social services from child protection to long-term care, from welfare benefits to community health. Coming from various professional backgrounds (social work, economics, psychology, medicine, law) they manage large budgets and workforces. They operate within a framework of regional and national policy and are accountable to local elected politicians.

Impact of and responses to the crisis

Case studies of budget reductions from the London Borough of Redbridge in the UK and the City of Aarhus in Denmark highlighted some efficiency measures and ways of redesigning services:

- Reduce number of people (of all ages) living in long-stay residential homes or hospitals
- Focus on prevention and rehabilitation to reduce long-term costs
- Develop accurate unit cost measurement to better manage budgets

The group also reported that there had been some reduction in staffing and higher charges for service users who are able to pay. Consultation with employees, service users, families and service providers (in-house and external) was seen as vital in making these changes work as was a clear political framework and accountability.

Leadership and management

Group members reported that they provided leadership or management at different times according to the needs of the organisation. Most had management or business training that comprised at least a year-long diploma prior to undertaking a senior management role. Although the two functions are closely related for social directors, most thought leadership was about setting and communicating future direction, while management was about the present use of resources (workforce and budget).

Evidence-based practice

ESN's Chief Executive John Halloran commented that 'evidence-based practice' may become a new driver of policy development and service design. For Karine Lycops, "good managers should look more closely at what research tells us about service effectiveness as a basis for designing and planning for the future." Whilst some evaluation programmes may properly last several years, professionals working with users may also need short-term indicators in order to monitor performance on an ongoing basis.

"My service is facing a budget cut of 4% for the second year running so either we have to reduce the service level or change the model."

Bruno Marcato, Director of Social Services Agency, Municipality of Bolzano, Italy

Towards evidence-based practice

This represents a continuum of responses to the question "How confident are we that this program/practice is a good use of our resources and improves outcomes?"

Full presentation by Sandra Nutley and other relevant presentations at www.movisie.nl

Key

- Not much confidence
- Very much confidence

Promising Approaches

"Some positive findings but the evaluations are not consistent or rigorous enough to be sure"

A

B

Evidence-based

"This program/practice has been rigorously evaluated and consistently shown to work"

C

D

"We've done it, we like it, and it feels like we make an impact"

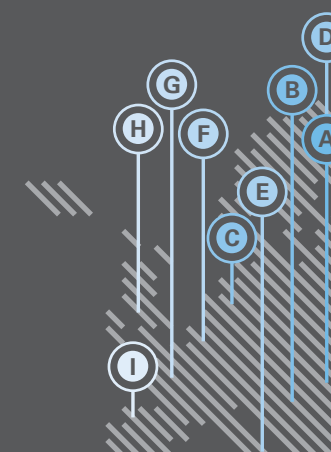
Good Practice

"This program/practice has been theory informed by a growing body of empirical research"

Research-based

Members of the working group

- A Monica Ghitu | Romania
- B Nenad Ivanisevic | Serbia
- C Guido-Alwin Kläser | Germany
- D Jukka Lindberg | Finland
- E Bruno Marcato | Italy
- F Karine Lycops | Belgium
- G Marie-Paule Martin-Blachais | France
- H John Powell | UK
- I Carlos Santos Guerrero | Spain



Vulnerable Youth in Transition Spring Seminar

The seminar explored how to improve outcomes for young people leaving care and those at risk of early school leaving. The event took place in Rome on 10–11 May in cooperation with the Lazio Region.

The seminar opened with the presentation of a major European report on young people not in employment, training or education (NEETs) by Massimiliano Mascherini of Eurofound. It estimates that the economic cost to Europe of the NEET phenomenon is 120 billion Euro per year and highlights social risks such as disaffection and democratic disengagement. Looking beyond the employed/unemployed dichotomy of youth in transition, the seminar addressed two major issues, namely young people leaving care and early school leaving.

Emily Munro, Coordinator of INTRAC (International Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care), explored the different stages of a young person's journey through care with its implications for policy and practice. Three examples were then discussed in detail: 'Pathways into adulthood' in Ghent, Belgium, 'KidS' in Cologne, Germany, and 'Borgo Ragazzi Don Bosco' in Italy. They illustrated the advantages of bridging the gap between services for children and services for adults.

Delegates listened to the inspiring stories of two young people. Jalal El Amri, from Morocco, had been in care in Catalonia, Spain. Thanks to his determination and the support provided by professionals including study grants and supported accommodation, he achieved his dream of going

to university. Silje Hansen grew up in the care system in Norway and is now drawing on her own experiences in her job at an NGO which works with children in care. Closing the session, the panel reflected on the messages from the young people and agreed on the critical importance of a stable ongoing relationship with a 'significant other' for a child leaving the care system.

The second session contributed to the current debate in combating early school leaving, which is an objective of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Speakers looked at research data and practical initiatives to help students in vulnerable situations, including children in public care, Roma children and those with health problems. The discussions were based around the YIPPEE project, the Resource Centre for Roma Communities in Romania, and the M@zl programme in the Netherlands.

The session was concluded by Clare Ryan, Chief Executive Officer at the National Educational Welfare Board in Dublin, who talked about the successful strategies that have been implemented in Ireland, one of the few countries which has met the EU target of reducing early school leaving to below 10%.

All practice examples presented at the seminar can be found in our Practice Library www.esn-eu.org/practice-library

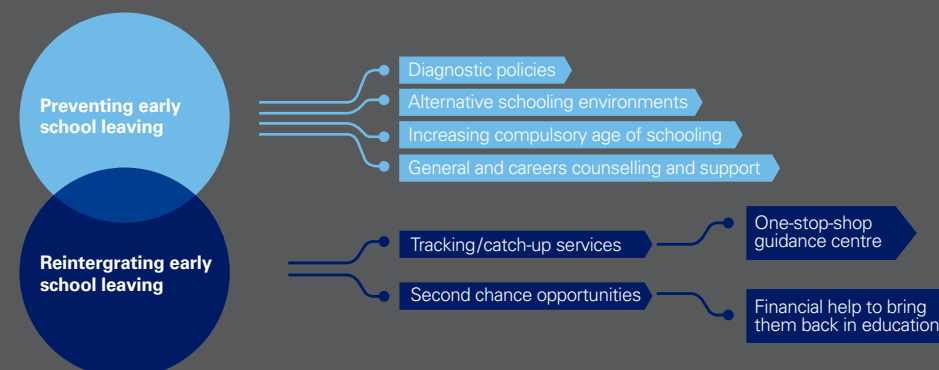


"I have heard the word 'vulnerable' a lot here, but these children are strong and independent. They have so much to learn but so much to give too."

Silje Hansen, who grew up in care and is now a Media Manager for Children and Youth (Barn og Unge), Norway

Member States initiatives to prevent and re-integrate early school leaving (ESL)

Adapted from Eurofound (2012), "NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe", Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.



Managing Change in Community Care Training Course

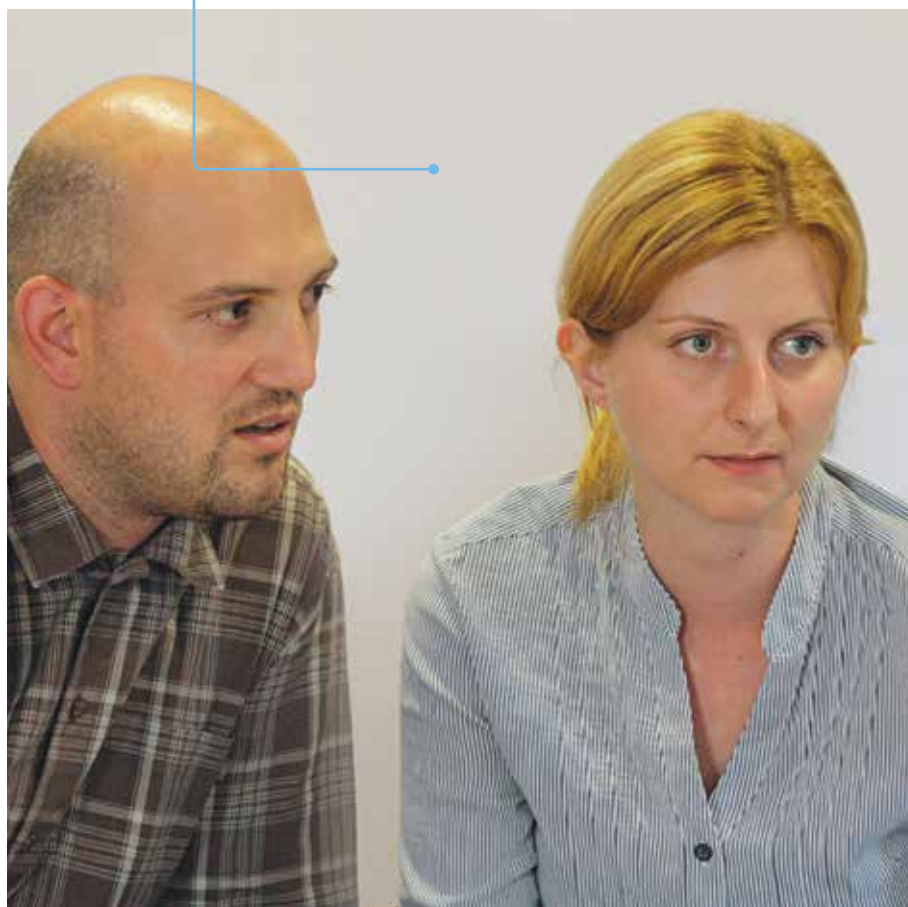
ESN's training programme continued to support policy makers and service providers from the Visegrád countries in the transition to community care. The final two sessions explored a more practical approach to de-institutionalisation. The training was organised in cooperation with the Tizard Centre at the University of Kent in the UK.

“What we discussed has helped us now add de-institutionalisation as a new priority in our regional social strategy for 2013-2020.”

Piotr Nowak-Skyrpan, Social Research Manager, Mazovian Social Policy Centre, Poland

“After our meetings I am even more committed to community-based care than I was before.”

Ágnes Csicsely, Social Services Expert, Ministry of Human Resources, Hungary



The case for community care

Participants discussed the key arguments in the case for the transition from institutional to community care, making reference to ESN's recent report on 'Developing Community Care'. The group acknowledged the need to raise and sustain dissatisfaction with the institutional care model. Strengthening the voice of service users and raising awareness amongst politicians, government officials and professionals were seen as vital steps in this process.

From theory to practice: visits to social services

In order to compare services with what they know from their own countries, participants visited four protected community flats and an institution in the process of closure in Prague. The Woodbine Community Centre for adults with learning disabilities in London also opened its doors and provided participants with an example of a service based at the heart of the community. Presentations of case studies from Georgia, Sweden and Moldova and a session on how to communicate effectively with politicians and civil servants allowed for debate about the more practical steps involved in managing the transition process. A visit to the Paralympic Games in London highlighted the potential of people with disabilities to break down barriers in sport and society.

Managing community care: challenges and opportunities

Representatives from each of the four countries gave in-depth analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that their country faced in managing the transition process. Some shared challenges were:

- Creating a supportive policy environment for developing services based in the community
- Improving cooperation and dialogue between different levels of government
- Strengthening user and self-advocate movements which promote the rights of users to live in the community
- Raising awareness and educating the public to help overcome the negative stereotypes of people living in institutions and promote their inclusion in society

European experts also gave presentations on how to use Structural Funds for the 2014-2020 EU budget period to develop community-based services. The European Expert Group, of which ESN is a member, has successfully influenced the use of European funds to support community living as opposed to refurbishing and modernising existing institutions.

John Halloran highlighted that ESN was committed to “working alongside local public social services to make the transition from institutional to community care as smooth as possible.”

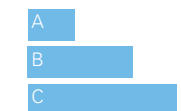
Since the final training course, ESN has continued to work closely with the Visegrád countries, attending and giving presentations at seminars on de-institutionalisation in the Mazovia region in Poland and in Bratislava in Slovakia.

Variability in users' performance in different residential settings (England and Wales)

Emerson and Hatton (1994), "Moving Out: Relocation from Hospital to Community", London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Residents' engagement in meaningful activity (%)

0 25 50 75 100



A Large institutions

B Small institutions

C Housing

ESN's report on 'Developing Community Care' in five languages can be found on our website at www.esn-eu.org/publications

Retaining and Regaining Independence and Inclusion in Later Life Autumn Seminar

In the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations the seminar focused on prevention and rehabilitation in social services for older people. The event took place in Stuttgart, Germany, on 24-25 October in cooperation with the German Association for Public and Private Welfare and the City of Stuttgart.

Senior professionals in social services discussed how social and health care services should be designed in order to promote independent living and social participation amongst older people. In addition, the contribution of health promotion, volunteers and family carers to this agenda was discussed. In the first session, Kai Leichsenring, coordinator of the INTERLINKS project, noted that a stronger focus on person-oriented approaches, which embedded prevention in crisis-oriented and long-term care systems, was needed. Marianne van den Berg from the European Commission presented the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing which brought greater attention to prevention, screening and early diagnosis, contributing to active ageing and independent living.

The focus of the second plenary session was how to transform services to promote prevention and rehabilitation. Among the examples was the Municipality of Fredericia, Denmark, which supports people with potential care needs by focusing on the essential tasks of daily life. Through this 'Everyday rehabilitation' programme, older people see themselves as confident and independent, while the municipality also saves approximately 20,000 Euro per person per year compared with its previous approach. Prevention and rehabilitation strategies from

Portugal and the Netherlands were also presented, focusing on integrated social and health care and deploying ICT to meet older people's needs.

In the third session, speakers stressed factors beyond social and health care that influence older people's quality of life. Measures which enable older people to remain at home and participate actively in their local community, such as health promotion, volunteering and life-long learning opportunities, and the contribution of family carers were examined.

In the final group discussion, the delegates stressed that:

- The shift from intervention to early prevention and health promotion could be achieved by integrated local services promoting active ageing and an age-friendly environment.
- Structural reforms at national and local level, alongside financial support, would promote integrated services which identify the needs of older people and help them achieve social inclusion.
- The role of older people with care needs has to change from passive recipient/patient to empowered participant by involving service users in the planning and delivery of services.

All practice examples presented at the seminar can be found in our Practice Library www.esn-eu.org/practice-library



European Year for **Active Ageing** and **Solidarity between Generations** 2012



“Mum’s needs are greater as time goes on. Yes, it’s hard, but I wouldn’t have it any other way. She’s MY mum, and I should look after her.”

Carolyn Akintola, a wheelchair user from Ireland who looks after her elderly mother

Copenhagen 2012: Shaping the Future for Sustainable Social Services 20th European Social Services Conference

Marking 20 years since the first European Social Services Conference, this year's event took place in Copenhagen on 25-27 June. The event brought together over 350 delegates including researchers, professionals and managers of social services in Europe, to share ideas and innovative solutions for a sustainable social Europe.

The main theme of the conference was 'Shaping the Future for Sustainable Social Services: Quality, Performance, Innovation'. Over the course of three full days, packed with four plenary sessions and 24 workshops, speakers and delegates tackled the question 'How do we create a sustainable society where economic, social and environmental progress go hand in hand?'.

The first plenary session, with speakers including European Commissioner László Andor, Danish Minister Karen Hækkerup and Norwegian Minister Inger Bjurstrøm, looked at the policy roadmap and brought a European, Nordic and national perspective to the discussion.

The plenary sessions on day two addressed the key social, economic and environmental challenges in which social services have a role, including how to reduce the environmental

impact of public services or how to deploy new human resources and technology for efficient service delivery.

The workshops enabled a more 'hands on' debate on a range of issues, such as integrating technology in health care services, shifting community mental health services towards a recovery approach, and improving workforce retention and quality in child protection services. The conference concluded with the round table discussion between panelists and delegates. One of the final key messages from Belgian Employment Minister Monica De Coninck argued for innovation and change: "We are often trained to look for 37 reasons why something cannot change, but have only two good reasons to change. We should focus on these two good reasons, try to be positive and communicate well."

ESSC 2013 on 'Transforming Lives! Reshaping Services for a Changing Society' will take place in Dublin on 17-19 June. You can register on www.esn-conference.org

Copenhagen 2012 20th European Social Services Conference



"Our social model needs to be adapted to meet tomorrow's challenges. Social policy and social services are an investment in society that will pay off in the longer term - by helping build a more inclusive and more prosperous society."

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



Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion through Social Services Influencing Policy

The EU has set a target to lift 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020. This target is supported through policy monitoring, mutual learning and awareness raising. ESN is an engaged stakeholder, representing local and regional government social services at EU level.

The year began well with the greater recognition of social services by the European Commission. Its annual policy analysis and guidelines, the Annual Growth Survey, made tackling the social impact of the crisis one of its five priorities and it advised Member States to give priority to “adequate and affordable social services to prevent marginalisation of vulnerable groups.”

However, ESN members assessed a sample of eight National Reform Programmes (NRPs) in April and found that social services were hardly mentioned. The NRPs focused on economy and employment in

the main. Where they did refer to social issues, they tended to emphasise labour market activation and education. There was little reference, for example, to older people with care needs, or those with a disability or a mental health problem.

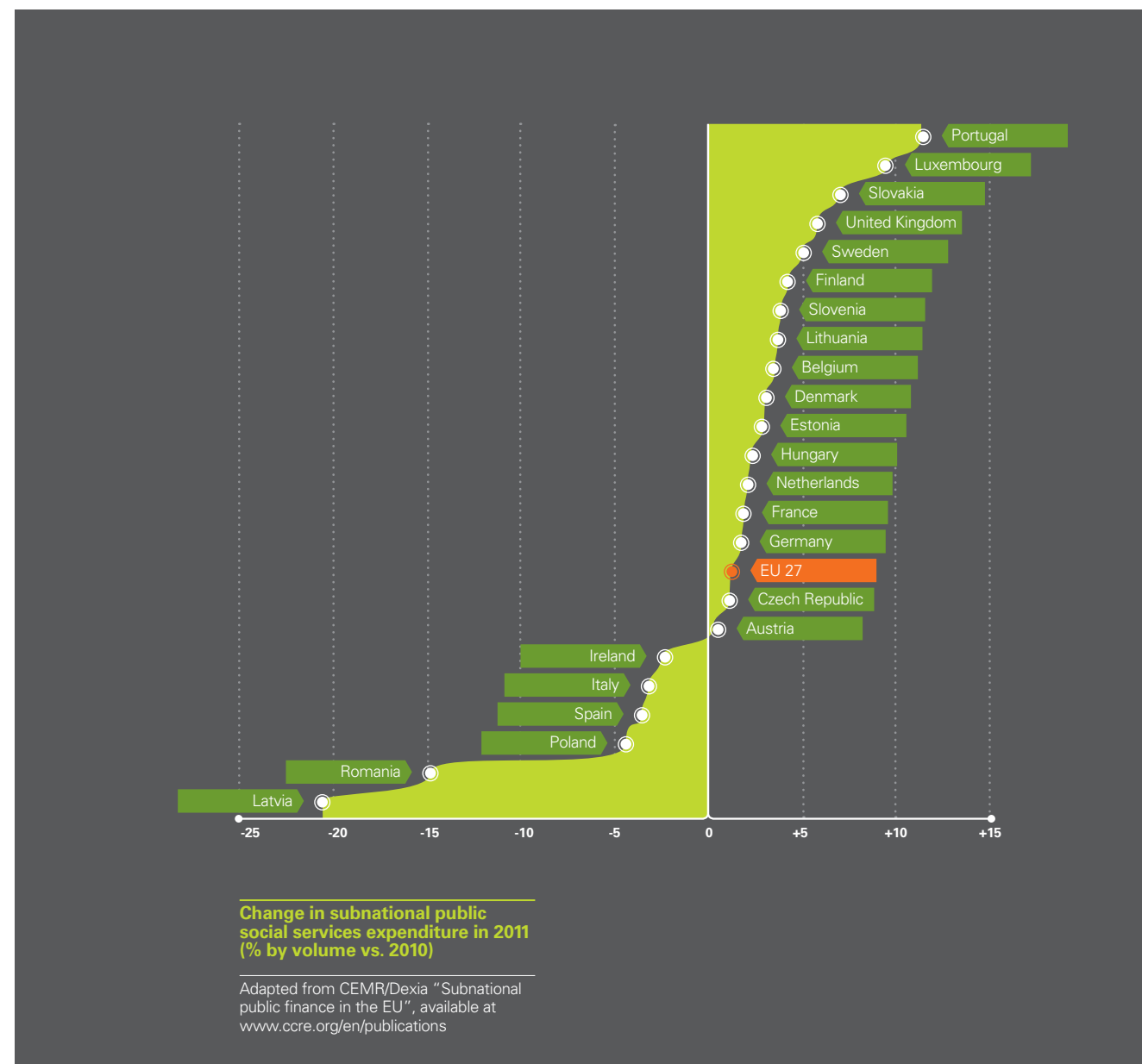
If Europe is to promote truly ‘inclusive growth’ as per the Europe 2020 Strategy, then those at the margins of society have to be visible in the NRPs. There is a concurrent need to recognise those essential “adequate and affordable” social services (and indeed other public services and policy efforts) that aim to help people overcome or manage challenging life circumstances and achieve social inclusion.

ESN calls not only for greater recognition of what social services do, but also promotes their greater effectiveness and efficiency through the EU process. In May 2012, ESN participated in an EU debate on ‘what social services are most essential for social inclusion?’. In common with civil society stakeholders, ESN argued that everyone needs a different combination of social (and other) services to achieve social inclusion.

“It is precisely those European countries with the most effective social protection systems and the most developed social partnerships that are among the most successful and competitive economies not only in Europe, but in the world.”

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

Read ESN's position papers on our website www.esn-eu.org/publications



Investing in Children and Promoting Wellbeing Influencing Policy

ESN has been actively supporting the European Commission and Member States to develop a Recommendation on child poverty and wellbeing, to be published in 2013. The Recommendation will give children visibility in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy and help Member States achieve the targets intended to lift 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020.

ESN recognises the multi-dimensional nature of child poverty and supports the three-pillar approach based on: access to adequate resources; access to quality services and opportunities; and children's participation. An ESN paper summarises what managers and senior professionals in social services for children and families believe to be key elements under each pillar. ESN expressed concern for the most disadvantaged and socially excluded children (children with disabilities or mental health problems, children in alternative care, those at risk of neglect/abuse, undocumented child migrants and asylum seekers, Roma children), as well as the need to help parents or other adults involved in a child's upbringing.

Based on members' input, ESN responded to the Social Protection Committee's advisory report to the European Commission and assessed the proposed child poverty indicators. ESN evaluated the extent to which they were specific to children's wellbeing rather than their parents' income or employment, and how far they captured the situation of children outside traditional households, including those in care and in institutions.

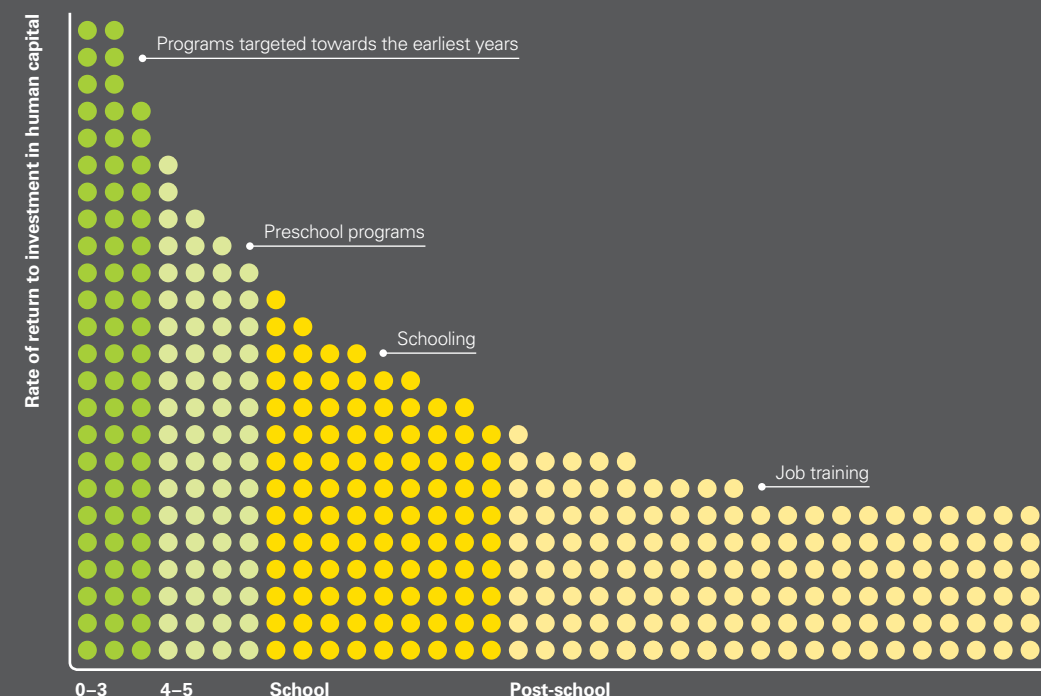
In October, ESN and its members participated in a conference of the Cyprus EU Presidency on 'Investing in Children' to share their ideas and shape future policy. ESN argued for better cooperation between children's services.

With the publication of the European Commission Recommendation 'Investing in Children' in 2013, ESN continues to work with members and EU stakeholders in understanding and responding to its policy implications.

Read ESN's position papers on our website www.esn-eu.org/publications

"It is necessary to pay particular attention to children with more than one problem, for instance, disability and risk of harm. An integrated approach and the pooling of budgets should be examined."

Marie-Paule Martin-Blachais, Managing Director,
National Observatory of Children at Risk (GIPED), France



Rates of return to human capital investment at different ages

Adapted from Heckman (2008), "The Case for Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children", Washington, DC: First Focus.

Promoting Social Services EU Policy Making

The European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012

Throughout the year ESN participated in conferences, seminars and meetings organised at the EU level to discuss the role of public services in promoting active ageing and the social contribution of older people. This encouraged policy makers and other stakeholders to exchange ideas and implement actions that promote employment, social participation and independent living amongst older people. In December, the Council of the European Union adopted Guiding Principles for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations which will serve as a checklist for national authorities and other stakeholders.

The Road to 2020 and Sustainable Health Systems Brussels, Belgium, 31 May

Eurohealthnet, the European network of health promotion agencies, organised a debate on measures to ensure healthy societies and equitable access to health services. ESN Chief Executive John Halloran spoke at the round table about the relationship between providers of services and users, and “the need to move from paternalism to cooperation and partnership.” Prevention, rehabilitation and independent living should be the focus of reform in health and social care systems, he argued.



“Perhaps we ought to be talking more about short-term care: a quick short burst of support and training to help a person regain independence and inclusion after an illness or a fall.”

ESN Vice Chair, Christian Fillet, Belgium

Wellbeing and Dignity for Older People

Participation in EU project

ESN helped shape the European Quality Framework for Long-term Care as part of a partnership with other stakeholders in the WeDO project, led by AGE Platform Europe. The project states that quality services for older persons should respect human rights and dignity, be person-centred, preventive, outcome-oriented and evidence based. ESN members and other stakeholders in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden may like to get in touch with national WeDO coalitions via the website www.wedo-partnership.eu.

IBM International Social Sector Forum

Warsaw, Poland, 15–16 October

The conference was entitled ‘Reinventing Social Security in an Era of Open Government’. ESN’s John Halloran spoke of the challenges facing social services in Europe, suggesting the need for a new direction for the welfare state. He argued that recent developments in new technology may provide a platform for change – towards responsive services that deliver better quality of life through greater choice and empowerment, and increases in communication. Nevertheless, “the wrong use of technology can lead to ‘over standardisation’ in contrast to personalisation.”

Promoting Social Services EU Policy Making continued

Peer Review: Age-friendly Services and Products Warsaw, Poland, 29–30 October

The review was organised by the Polish government to evaluate its 'Solidarity Across the Generations Programme'. ESN was represented by its member Terry Madden, Social Work Practice Supervisor in Ireland, and Lisa Schönenberg from the Secretariat. Participants discussed measures to extend labour market careers, and therefore guarantee pension income adequacy and sustainability. They assessed that active social participation of older people can lead to both economic growth and the creation of new jobs. ESN emphasised that the involvement of users in the design of products and services was essential to promoting employment amongst older people.

OECD Expert Consultation on Integrated Services Paris, France, 8–9 November

As OECD's first consultation on this topic, the meeting provided a forum for over 60 experts to discuss the similarities and differences in integrated services for populations with multiple needs. Two ESN members brought local perspectives: Graham Owen, Children Services Director from Sweden, who presented an example of an integrated approach to family support in Botkyrka, and Marianne Cohen, Director of Recovery DK in Denmark, who



presented the person-centred approach to mental health and social services in Aarhus. At the round table, ESN's John Halloran stressed the need for integrated approaches based on shared data, budgets, and a value base that places users and citizens at the centre of the decisions that affect their lives.

The European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community- based Care

Brussels, Belgium, 20 November
ESN continued to be active in the field of de-institutionalisation joining the European Expert Group (EEG) which brings together European stakeholder organisations active in the field of social inclusion, non-discrimination and fundamental rights. Together with the group, ESN has contributed to the drafting of a set of Guidelines and a Toolkit on the use of EU funds for the development of community and family-based alternatives to institutional care in Member States. In November ESN also took part in the high-level event in Brussels to launch the publications.

Conference on Social Innovation and Social Policy Experimentation Brussels, Belgium, 26 November

The conference discussed how to best shape EU support to social innovation through the Social Investment Package, Europe 2020 and European financial instruments.

"We need to sustain social investment in human capital to avoid higher costs in the future", Commissioner László Andor told delegates. ESN's Vice Chair Christian Fillet chaired a workshop on testing and up-scaling social policy innovation. From the perspective of social services, he told the workshop: "We have to innovate within social services, but we also have to be a part of social innovation in the local community and in the wider welfare and health system."

Annual Convention on Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion Brussels, Belgium, 12–14 December

At this year's Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, ESN's John Halloran chaired a workshop on digital inclusion, stressing the potential of digital technology to become an instrument for social inclusion. Participants discussed their experience using ICT for inclusion and how digital technology can contribute to the reshaping of social protection systems. They also emphasised the EU's role in promoting digital inclusion by fostering collaboration between public, private and third sector actors.

United Kingdom

Scottish Government,
Health and Social
Care Directorate

United Kingdom

Centre for International
Research on Care, Labour
and Equalities (CIRCLE),
School of Sociology and
Social Policy, University
of Leeds

Portugal

Centre for Research and
Studies in Sociology (CIES),
University of Lisbon

Spain

Regional Ministry of Health
and Social Welfare
of Andalusia

Denmark

City of Copenhagen

The Netherlands

National Association of
Local Governments for
Social Welfare (LCGW)

Germany

Network of Social
Planners (VSOP)

Spain

Directorate General for
Families and Community
Policies, Basque Country

Greece

Public Benefit Corporation
of Thessaloniki

Finland

Valvira (National Supervisory
Authority for Welfare
and Health)

Poland

Mazovian Voivodeship,
Social Policy Centre

Republic of
Kosovo

Ministry of Labour
and Social Welfare

Greece

Hellenic Agency for Local
Development and Local
Government (EETAA)

A Growing and Diverse Network New Members

In 2012, ESN welcomed 13 new national and regional members. The network now covers more than 90 member organisations in 30 countries.

Sharing Knowledge and Experience Working with Members

Throughout the year ESN has provided members with opportunities for networking, mutual learning and policy development. Likewise, members continue to work together and cooperate outside the framework of ESN events and projects.

Declining, Ageing and Regional Transformation (DART)

ESN Members work together in EU project

Three ESN members – the Autonomous Province of Galicia, the Lower Silesian Centre for Social Policy and the Veneto Region – worked together with eleven other regions facing demographic change in this project. DART identified good practices that strengthen the economy, concentrating on education and life-long learning, health care and social services. The concept of a 'life-cycle-proof neighbourhood' is presented as a good way forward, aiming to offer good accessibility and mobility, an array of services, and an eco-sustainable design. The DART project was presented by Daniel López Muñoz from Galicia at ESN's autumn seminar.

Local Strategies to Combat Homelessness

ESN-FEANTSA cooperation

ESN continued its cooperation with FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, and HABITACT, their network of local public authorities. In March, ESN members from the UK, Belgium and Sweden represented ESN at a HABITACT peer review of the Ghent model. In June, a seminar organised by HABITACT in cooperation with the Committee of the Regions looked at successful funding strategies in line with three key themes: budgeting, diversifying funding sources and cost-efficiency.



ESN Members from Belgium, Spain and Portugal participated at the event.

Swedish Social Directors visit Icelandic colleagues

Reykjavik, Iceland, 28–30 March

The visit was hosted by Aðalsteinn Sigfússon, Chair of the Icelandic Association of Social Directors. Struggling with a recent unemployment rate of 7%, compared to 1% in the past, Iceland was inspired by the social services in Stockholm in their approach to tackle unemployment. The visit of the Swedish directors offered them a chance for further discussion. For the Swedish delegates it was interesting to discover the close connection between social work strategy and practice, an advantage given by a small scale country, and something for other social services to consider.

Families and Society: Growth and Child Welfare Castellon, Spain, 26–27 April

The seminar marked the seventh anniversary of 'Caixa dels Colors', a multidisciplinary project on early childcare funded by ESN member Diputación de Castellón. Alfonso Lara Montero from the Secretariat spoke about the long-term effects and existing evidence of the impact of investing in early years' prevention services in children's wellbeing. He compared two longitudinal studies, the Perry Preschool Programme (USA) and the EPPE (England), whilst analysing the possible implications of such research in policies linking early childcare to social and education policies.

Developing Social Services in Kosovo

Pristina, Kosovo, 28 September

Alexis Jay from the Scottish Government represented ESN at Kosovo's Conference on 'Shaping the Future: Innovation and Sustainability in Social Services'. Her presentation showed that systemic innovation is possible in social services and the wider welfare state even at a time of crisis. The conference was supported by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, ESN member, and grants from UKAid/DFID, under a social services development project.

Social Services: Crisis and Solutions

San Sebastian, Spain, 30–31 October

Organised by the SiiS Centre of Documentation and Studies on behalf of the Basque Government, the seminar addressed the economic and social sustainability of the welfare state and its future priorities. ESN's Stephen Barnett, Policy Director, and Steinar Eggen Kristensen, Social Director in Aarhus, gave a speech on 'Adapting European Social Services to the Economic Crisis'. Stephen Barnett noted: "Despite the social impact of the crisis, it should not be forgotten that general social protection and specialist social work and care services make a difference." Steinar Eggen Kristensen described the measures taken in Aarhus to get spending under control, noting a 20% saving in mental health care by focusing on recovery and support at home.



Managing in Challenging Times Governance

The Board of ESN takes seriously its responsibilities for the governance and direction of the organisation. It values the 90 ESN members by consulting regularly with them to ensure that the network acts in accordance with its mission and values. ESN promotes social justice and inclusion through the development of quality local public social services, in partnership with people who use social care services.

With continued pressure on public finances, combined with increased demand for services, the Board has taken time to consider the issues faced by different countries across Europe. It shaped a programme that provided opportunities in 2012 for members to exchange experience and skills in managing change during these turbulent times. The Board also recognised the special challenges faced by Greece, Portugal, Spain and Romania and in 2013 will undertake social impact assessment visits to these countries looking to strengthen cooperation further.

Within the Board, the ESN Business Committee oversees the activities of the network. Its members play an active part in our main events and meetings. For example, they joined participants in the final session of our training programme on de-institutionalisation and ESN's High Level Advisory Committee in London in August.

The Annual General Meeting of ESN took place prior to the conference in Copenhagen and was attended by a large number of members. This is an increasingly important event for members to meet and discuss the work of ESN with the Board and the Secretariat. The conference continues to be the key event for all of ESN's members to meet and gives the opportunity to hear directly from the key politicians and policy makers across Europe. At the Copenhagen 2012 Conference, European Commissioner László Andor and Danish Minister Karen Hækkerup joined ESN members for a networking session just before giving their keynote addresses.

Business Committee and participants at the 'Managing Change' training programme on de-institutionalisation

From left to right

Tünde Török,
Deputy Manager,
Integrated Social Institution, Hungary

Irakli Nadareishvili,
Deputy Minister for Labour,
Health and Social Affairs, Georgia

Martial Milaret,
ESN Treasurer, France

Christian Fillet,
ESN Vice Chair, Belgium

John Halloran,
ESN Chief Executive

Ágnes Simonyi,
Former Deputy Secretary of State
for the Ministry of Labour, Hungary

Lars-Göran Jansson,
ESN Chair, Sweden



The ESN secretariat continues to be an important link with our members and comprises staff from 7 countries who speak over 10 languages. This year we welcomed a new Communications Officer, Irina Savin from Romania, and a Policy Officer, Lisa Schönenberg from Germany. ESN would also like to acknowledge the contribution of its interns during the year, Nuria de Valle Gonzalez from Spain and Emilie Cazenave from France, together with a special mention of Stella Kristín Viðisdóttir, Director of Social Services in Reykjavik, for working with ESN in the months prior to the annual conference.

London Paralympic Games Inspire a Generation

Inspired by the talent of the Paralympic athletes, ESN is committed to continuing its work on promoting independent living for people with disabilities and active inclusion in society.

Policy makers and service managers currently working on de-institutionalisation with ESN spent a day at the London 2012 Paralympics together with the Business Committee and Secretariat colleagues. With over 4,000 athletes from 164 countries and featuring 20 sports from goalball, judo and power lifting, to wheelchair rugby, tennis and sitting volleyball, these were the largest Paralympic Games ever held. 251 world records were set at this edition of the Games.

The games also contributed (at least in the short term) to changing attitudes, as seen in an Olympic Games impact study:

- 8 out of 10 respondents agree that the Paralympics had a positive impact on the way people with an impairment are viewed by society.
- 1 in 3 respondents said the Games have changed their attitude towards people with disabilities.
- 74% agree the Games have shown how to treat disabled people with respect and equality.
- And finally, most people agree that the Paralympic Games are about ability, not disability.

Sport is just one of the many activities where people with disabilities can break down barriers and achieve amazing performances. ESN has been working to promote a vision of Europe where everyone, especially children, youth and older people with disabilities, have the opportunity to live as normal a life as possible alongside others.

Let's be inspired to be ambitious for everyone's inclusion and participation!

“Our minds were opened to what people can do, and to what can be achieved by sheer talent and determination.”

Sebastian Coe, London 2012
Organising Committee Chair



From Social Protection to Social Investment?

EU and ESN Priorities in 2013

ESN's work in 2013 will be influenced by the European Commission's new proposals to recalibrate welfare and health systems to focus on social investment.

The main headlines of the Social Investment Package (SIP) are:

- Greater simplification of access to services and benefits, and better targeting
- More targeted, conditional and effective labour market integration schemes
- Focus on a social investment approach at all ages, from early childhood to later life

The Commission argues that "social investment helps to 'prepare' people to confront life's risks, rather than simply 'repairing' the consequences." The Package includes thematic reviews and proposals on a number of ESN's priority areas in recent years, notably active inclusion, children's inclusion and wellbeing, and long-term care. ESN will be responding to the Social Investment Package in a number of forums throughout 2013.

ESN's working group on 'Leadership, Performance, Innovation' will consider to what extent the social investment approach can be followed in times of rising demand and declining budgets. It will work with the Board and other ESN members to develop an ESN position on social investment and identify future areas of work within the Package.

A peer review will take place in Dublin in May 2013 during the Irish Presidency to review the Commission Recommendation 'Investing in Children'. This proposes a policy model based on three pillars: adequate income, access

to services and participation. The peer review will test national legislation in Bulgaria, France, Ireland and Sweden against the Commission's recommendations, identifying strengths and gaps.

A policy and practice workshop will take place in the autumn, which will review the SIP documents on long-term care and health, besides the European Innovation Partnership for Active and Healthy Ageing. It will seek to identify future priorities for ESN's work on older people's services.

Working with our Members at local and regional level, EU institutions and stakeholders, and Member States, ESN will continue to exchange good practice and develop policy proposals on de-institutionalisation, active inclusion in the labour market and the participation of people with disabilities and long-term conditions.

The SIP will also be a topic for discussion in the final round table of the Dublin 2013 European Social Services Conference 'Transforming Lives! Reshaping Services for a Changing Society' on 17-19 June. ESN will close the year and its current three-year EU-funded programme 2011-13 with a Members' Forum in Brussels. There will be a review of our work over the last three years; insights into the EU policy context, notably social investment; and a consultation on future policy and practice priorities for ESN.



"I am delighted to see the long-standing commitment in social services at local level to investing in service users' potential recognised in the Social Investment Package."

Lars-Göran Jansson, ESN Chair, Sweden

"Enabling individuals to live up to their full potential to take part in social and economic life... entails supporting people at critical junctions in their lives."

European Commission Communication 'Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion'

European Social Network is supported by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (PROGRESS 2007-2013).

This 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 2007-2013 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.

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

 www.esn-eu.org

European Social Network
Victoria House
125 Queens Road
Brighton BN1 3WB
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1273 739 039
Fax: +44 (0) 1273 739 239
Email: info@esn-eu.org
Web: www.esn-eu.org