



European  
Social  
Network

Social Services  
in Europe

## Annual Review 2013

Investing in people and communities

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The European Social Network  
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European Commission

The European Social Network (ESN) brings together people who plan, manage and deliver public social services, together with those in regulatory and research organisations. We support the development of effective social policy and social care practice through the exchange of knowledge and experience.

**Annual Review 2013**

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# Highlights of the year

2013 has been another challenging year for social services across Europe so ESN is more committed than ever to look for solutions, form new partnerships and promote knowledge exchange.

## November

- Organised the ESN Members' Forum in Brussels
- ESN members contributed to the Annual Convention on Poverty and Social Exclusion



## December

- ESN members, directors of children's services, contributed knowledge to the EU Forum on the Rights of the Child in Brussels



## January

- Launched our new website with a Practice Library and Members' Area
- Visited Greece to assess the impact of austerity on social services

## February

- Contributed to the IBM Cúram Research Institute roundtable series in Australia
- Welcomed the European Commission's Recommendation 'Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage'

## March

- Held exchanges with ESN members about the Social Investment Package and published several commentary pieces on the subject

## April

- Held our spring seminar 'Choice and Control for Service Users' in Helsinki in partnership with our Finnish members
- Visited Portugal to assess the impact of austerity on social services
- Shared lessons from practice at Social Protection Committee meeting on long-term care



## June

- Organised the 21<sup>st</sup> European Social Services Conference 'Transforming Lives! Reshaping Services for a Changing Society' in Dublin in cooperation with the Irish EU Presidency
- Chief Executive John Halloran took over as co-chair of the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care

## May

- Held first peer review of ESN's 'Investing in Children Services, Improving Outcomes' project in Dublin
- Contributed to the Romanian Social Services Conference in Cluj-Napoca



## September

- Held final meeting of ESN's working group 'Leadership, Performance, Innovation'
- Contributed to a peer review 'Dignity First - Priorities in Reform of Care Services' in Sweden

## August

- Developed ESN's four-year strategy 2014-2017



## July

- Contributed to a French national conference on active inclusion and employment in Bordeaux

Letter from  
John Halloran  
Chief Executive

Dear members and friends of ESN,

In this annual review we look back at our work in 2013, a year that continued to challenge us to find solutions for rising social needs with declining budgets.

We welcomed the launch of the Social Investment Package by the European Commission, which reiterated the role of social services in empowering people “to live up to their full potential to take part in social and economic life.” The way I see it, social services constitute a significant investment in people and local communities and we should all see ourselves as social investors.

Together with our members, we looked at how to enable choice and control for people with disabilities during our spring seminar in Helsinki, and at the challenges and opportunities in ageing and care during an autumn workshop in Brighton. We also launched a policy and research initiative to contribute to the implementation of the EU’s ‘Investing in Children’ Recommendation.

During the year I had the honour of becoming co-chair of the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care which enabled ESN to deepen its work on developing community care.

The year concluded with a successful Members’ Forum in Brussels where we reviewed our achievements in the past three years, and identified priorities for 2014-2017 within the renewed contract with the European Commission. We look forward to working with you over the next period.

Best wishes,



John Halloran  
Chief Executive



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## Leadership, Performance, Innovation Working Group

2013 was a very active second year for ESN's working group for directors of social services in local and regional government. They discussed and took evidence on: responding to the economic crisis and austerity; innovation, research and evidence-based practice; public services in partnership; leadership and management.

**"I would argue for social planning as a strategy for managing resources well: this would allow you to identify people's needs in each area and put services in place to respond to those needs."**

**Guido Kläser, Director of Social Services, Health and Housing, City of Erfurt, Germany**



Throughout the year, the working group members met three times to share and hear case studies on the impact of the crisis in Europe, and to discuss with experts about public service partnerships, leadership and management, and EU social investment policy.

### **Crisis: impact and responses** **25-26 March, Brighton**

At their first meeting of the year, group members shared their experiences in responding to the crisis in their own countries. The differences highlighted by the six case studies depended on the state of the economy, demographic trends, the level of service development and the structure of regional and local government. In parts of Germany, it has been possible to step up investment in social services because the economy

has been doing well. In Finland, economic pressures have combined with population ageing to necessitate structural reforms and service redesign from an already high level of investment. Italy still faces a dramatic North-South divide in welfare, social and health services, now worsened by a rapid reduction of state subsidies to regions. Since the crisis, demand for welfare has grown rapidly in Spain due to job losses and household debt; the system of social care provision has been scaled back. Slovakia is continuing to push forward the process of shifting from institutional to community care, whilst Slovenia is rationalising the local structure of its welfare state. The group recognised that social services cannot act alone, but have to build partnerships with other public services and stakeholders.

### **Public services: recognising a shared agenda**

**29-30 May, London**

The group's second meeting this year brought together experts from education, health and employment. These services may have a different legislation and professional culture, but essentially have a shared agenda to improve the lives of citizens. Katarzyna Kubacka of the OECD highlighted the contribution of education, in school and outside school, to social outcomes including better health and civic engagement. EuroHealthNet's director Clive Needle focused his input on health inequalities, noting that most countries' health systems are in fact focused on the treatment of sickness and disease, not on the promotion of health equity. "It is not only the lack of employment, but a multiplicity of other problems, that job-seekers face", said Matthias Schulze-Böing from the German Association of Job Centres. He stressed that clients may need help with childcare, psycho-social counselling, debt advice, drug rehabilitation, and assistance with housing, among others. The group believed that social directors had to take the lead locally in promoting social services as a valuable partner for education, health and employment services.

### **Leadership and management** **9-10 September, Brussels**

At the group's final meeting participants heard from guest expert Jo Cleary, whose

The Leadership Qualities Framework is structured around seven areas in which leaders demonstrate various personal and professional qualities.

[www.nsasocialcare.co.uk](http://www.nsasocialcare.co.uk)



©The National Skills Academy for Social Care

organisation, the National Skills Academy for Social Care, had developed a Leadership Qualities Framework for social services. She told the group that leadership is critical in achieving social care reforms, improving quality and making services more person-centred. Members of the working group testified that it was not an easy time to be a social director: you are the link person between the staff, who are under pressure and facing service cuts, and the politicians, who set the direction. You are also the main representative of your department to (other) service providers, to people

using services and even to the press. In these challenging times members felt they had to maintain their authenticity as leaders: to demonstrate to everyone that they knew it was a difficult time, but still to bring people together to find positive solutions for the future.

### **Next steps**

The working group's mandate ends in 2013 with the production of four working papers, but the group is set to continue as a Reference Group for Public Management of Social Services within ESN.

### Choice and Control for Service Users Spring Seminar

Over 100 delegates, directors of social services, service users and policy makers from across 19 countries met in Helsinki on 18-19 April to discuss the promotion of choice and control for people with disability. The seminar was co-organised by ESN members in Finland and hosted by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities.

“We need to open our minds and look for more simple solutions to promote choice and control for service users. Sometimes it is better to put the complex procedure aside and simply listen to the person in front of us.”

**Carlos Santos Guerrero,**  
Head of Services for Coordinating  
Community Social Services,  
Autonomous Region of  
Galicia, Spain

The first session of the seminar outlined the state of play for independent living in Europe. Delegates heard from Jos Huys from the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium, a service user himself: “Independent living means that people can grow up in their families, go to the neighbourhood school, use the same bus as their neighbours, work in jobs they like and start families of their own.” Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos from the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency argued that a number of factors are needed to put people in control of their life, particularly: community-based care, supported decision making and more financial independence, as well as mainstreaming initiatives in employment, education, politics and health care.

The seminar featured local and regional practices promoting choice and control: an evaluation of the Personal Assistance Scheme in Vienna showed how personal assistants can help people with disabilities to participate in social life, have access to work and live more autonomously. Another case study about the voucher system of personal assistance in Sweden explained how service users can influence the quality of the service by choosing their service provider.

Delegates also heard about user involvement: Tom Raines and Jude Wells from the Manchester Area Partnership’s ‘Right to control’ in the UK introduced the

concept of “co-production,” and Timo Kallioaho from Finland explained how he became an expert by experience and was now giving peer support to other people with mental health problems. Martin Rullis from Latvia shared his experience on how he was able to participate in society with the help of activities in a day care centre and a supported employment programme.

The implementation of independent living depends on different welfare structures, cultures and policies, and the balance between legal rights and financial resources. Delegates agreed that social services can promote choice and control by:

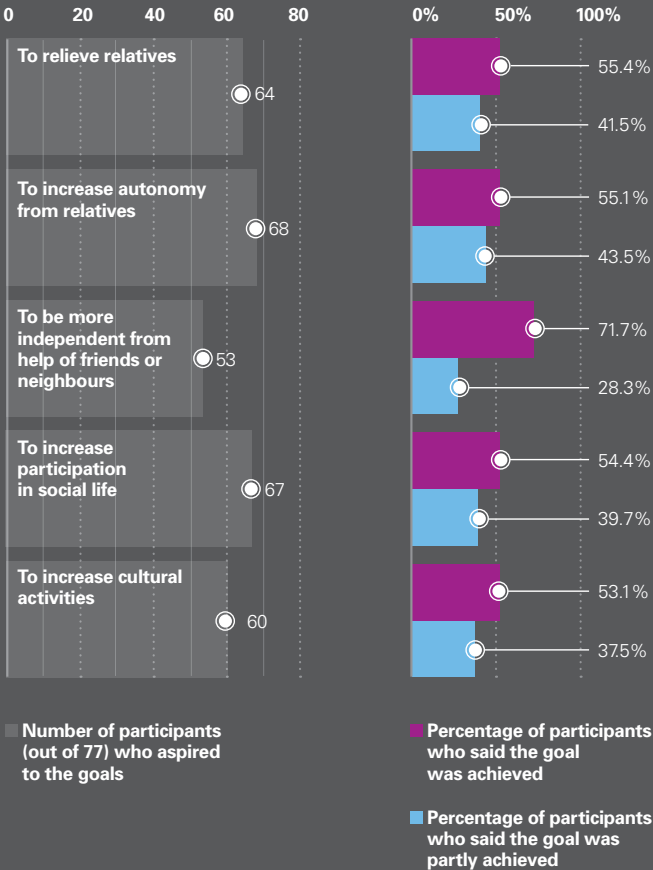
- setting up a system of choice with a range of service options that is based on the personal needs of the service user
- setting up person-centred services that provide information and support people with disabilities to make decisions
- developing wider partnerships with other sectors in order to mainstream choice and control
- changing attitudes towards people with disabilities which will allow the setting up of more enabling structures.

All practice examples presented at the seminar can be found in our Practice Library [www.esn-eu.org/practice-library](http://www.esn-eu.org/practice-library)

Our report ‘Independent living: making choice and control a reality’ can be found in our Publications section [www.esn-eu.org/publications](http://www.esn-eu.org/publications)

#### Achievement of individual goals through participation in the Personal Assistance Scheme in Vienna, Austria

Adapted from Martina Plohovits, Vienna Social Fund, Austria. Presentation at ESN Spring Seminar 2013



“When I started to work together with other people, I saw that their lives and choices were different than for people with intellectual disabilities. To make decisions for ourselves we need to have the knowledge.”

**Martins Rullis,**  
a service user from Latvia



## Investing in Children Services, Improving Outcomes Peer Review

ESN launched a three-year policy and research initiative to contribute to the implementation of the European Commission's Recommendation 'Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage' published in February. The first stage of the project was a peer review with delegations from four countries, which took place in Dublin on 15 May.

Delegates worked together to analyse the national policy and legal framework in their countries and compare it to the European Recommendation. They represented child welfare agencies, national ministries, municipal children's services, and NGO service providers in Ireland, France, Sweden and Bulgaria.

The event was opened by Frances Fitzgerald, Ireland's Minister for Children and Youth. She explained the changes taking place in Ireland in the area of child welfare and child protection, including the changes to the Constitution to ensure children have rights of their own as individuals rather than only as part of the family unit. The Minister also argued for investment in service infrastructure, "particularly more accessible and more affordable subsidised child care, since evidence shows that this type of investment yields far better returns" than direct cash payments.

Julius Op de Beke from the European Commission outlined key elements of the European Recommendation with regards to where to invest in access to resources, children's services and children's participation. He argued that "children need access to services that play an essential role in their development, such as early childhood education and care, health or housing."

The four country profiles gave an overview of the national legal and policy frameworks in the following five areas of the Recommendation: early childcare, education, health, housing and child protection. Some common gaps surfaced across all countries, including:

- the need for accessible services
- the lack of interagency work
- the lack of evaluation of outcomes
- the lack of clear identification of the rights of the child versus the rights of the family
- the need for better monitoring of needs in order to support planning.

Participants also discussed possible measures to overcome these weaknesses and agreed that better cooperation between national and local level, as well as across disciplines and services, is essential. The second stage of the project will take place in 2014 and will feature five other EU countries.

Visit our Practice Library for practice examples on children and families [www.esn-eu.org/practice-library](http://www.esn-eu.org/practice-library)

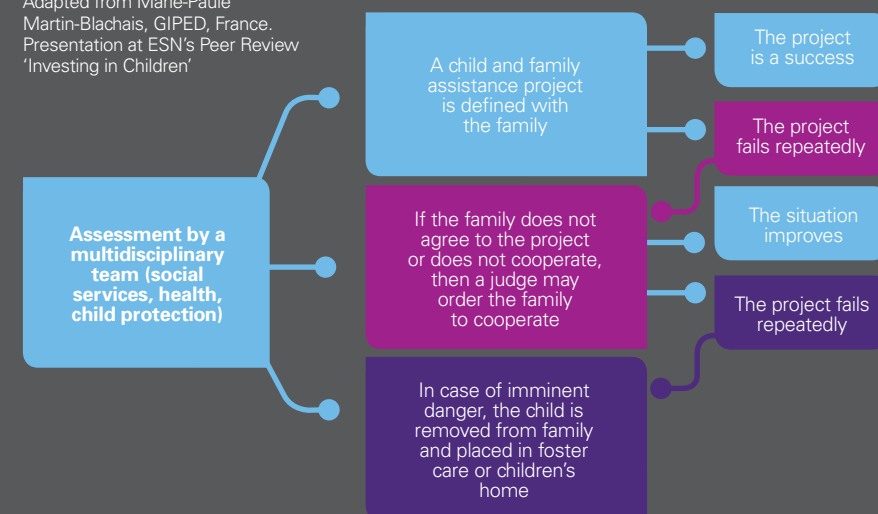
**"When I started as a social worker in Ireland, 90% of children in care were living in institutions. I am glad we managed to reverse this situation."**

**Paul Harrison, Head of Policy and Strategy, Health Service Executive, Ireland**



### The cycle of child protection in France

Adapted from Marie-Paule Martin-Blachais, GIPED, France. Presentation at ESN's Peer Review 'Investing in Children'



## Ageing and Care: Challenges and Opportunities in Social Services Workshop

Building on ESN's recent activities in the field of ageing and care, ESN members, senior managers and professionals from public social services, health agencies, research and workforce organisations met in Brighton on 25 October for a one day workshop to identify future priorities for developing services for older people.

The discussions focused on the challenges and opportunities to support active and healthy ageing and social inclusion through social and health care, especially at home. ESN invited guest experts involved in the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing which brings many EU-funded projects into a single framework for mutual learning and policy development.

Francesca Avolio from the Regional Healthcare Agency of Puglia, Italy, explained the knowledge exchange process on integrated care in Europe. Joan Martin from Louth County Council, Ireland, described the age-friendly strategy in Louth, which is based on the direct involvement of older people, stating that: "It is a holistic approach that creates environments for all. An age-friendly policy starts from the cradle and continues until the end of life."

ESN members emphasised that a local dialogue about the responsibility for planning for old age could help to create new social networks with communities, families and services. They noted the need for a mixed workforce, including social care workers, health professionals, migrants, volunteers and family carers, who all perform different tasks. However, both formal and informal carers often do not get sufficient financial and social recognition. Delegates underlined that future workforce planning and managing the mixture of carers can ensure that the right people are at the right place at the right time.

The shared role of health and social care was also on the agenda – and their impact on the wellbeing of older people. Workshop participants agreed on putting the needs of service users first, as the basis for integration of services. They also discussed how to support people to stay at home for as long as possible, e.g. by developing the skills of older people. ESN will investigate these questions on active ageing, workforce, integrated care, and home care in our future work together with ESN members, stakeholders and service users.



“We often talk separately about us and older people. However, the issues we are now talking about will affect us because we will be the older people. I don't know why we are still building big nursing homes – because we don't want to live there.”

Angelika Rosenberger-Spitzzy,  
Senior Citizens Officer, Vienna  
Social Fund, Austria







## Dublin 2013 21<sup>st</sup> European Social Services Conference

### Dublin 2013: Transforming Lives! Reshaping Services for a Changing Society 21<sup>st</sup> European Social Services Conference

How can we reshape services in order to transform the lives of our citizens? This was the key question at this year's European Social Services Conference in Dublin on 17-19 June. Organised in association with the Irish Presidency of the EU, the conference brought together over 360 delegates from 32 countries to discuss the role of social investment in redesigning social services.

**“Solidarity among citizens and social cohesion are values that must be fostered and maintained as key objectives in their own right.”**

**Michael D. Higgins,  
the President of Ireland**

Over the course of three inspiring days, the Dublin conference became the hub for discussions on how to reshape services for a changing society. Experts from different sectors shared their vision and asked the audience to rethink services for today's challenges: the impact of the economic crisis; the effects of demographic change; the desire for a more person-centred approach. Undoubtedly reforms require: political and professional leadership; new partnerships; an active role for citizens and communities.

#### **Solidarity and social cohesion for an open, generous and interdependent Europe**

The President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, opened the conference by emphasising the importance of cohesion and solidarity to the European project: “It is a time for socially driven policies based on normative theory. The policies we require need a democratic underpinning, which will only be forthcoming if there is a collective sense of solidarity across Europe. That solidarity requires the reaffirmation of common values, the recognition of the importance of social cohesion and an adherence to the founding vision of an open, generous and interdependent Europe.”

#### **Changing society, investing in the future**

During the first plenary session, Ireland's Minister of Social Protection, Joan Burton, presented the Irish EU Presidency's social policy achievements emphasising “the absolute need for an enhanced social dimension to economic decisions.” She underlined the significance of social investment in social services as “providing adequate and sustainable social protection, strengthening people's opportunities to participate in society, making services more integrated, investing in children and young people and giving more independence to people with disabilities.”

Speaking about education as the main driver in preventing social exclusion and poverty, the Director General for Education, Training, Culture and Youth at the European Commission, Jan Trzuszczński, called on Member States to promote quality education for all. He placed emphasis on reducing early school leaving, improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged learners, and the quality and availability of early childhood education and care: “Cross-sector strategies are required to link what schools and colleges can do with what other sectors and services such as employment, social work, health, finance, justice, housing and welfare can offer.”

## 21<sup>st</sup> European Social Services Conference continued

### Building partnerships in the community, health, housing and technology

Reviewing the framework for action for a fairer and healthier society, Sir Michael Marmot, author of a review on social determinants of health for WHO Europe, highlighted the synergies between health and social determinants. He stressed in particular the need to give every child the best possible start in life, create fair employment for all, and healthy and sustainable places and communities: "Individuals are crucial, communities are crucial, but so too are social services - absolutely vital."

In an inspirational speech, Cormac Russell, Managing Director of Nurture Development in Ireland, highlighted the need to shift attention "from what is wrong to what is strong" in order to focus on the assets of people in the community. In Russell's view, social change is a bi-product of two tools: the public system with institutions and services, and the community.

How can social services manage technology and what should they do with it? Chris Worman, Director of Program Development at TechSoup Global, told delegates that data can be used to improve access to social services and increase productivity. He underlined the potential of social media to help communicate with the general public and to make social services more transparent. Worman's presentation prompted one delegate to react: "Your next strategic hire may be people who don't know social services, they may be data experts."

### Social investment: a tool to transform lives and make services more effective

The final roundtable sparked a stimulating debate about how national policy makers and social service managers could draw upon the new social investment discourse to ensure the best results for service users and citizens. ESN Chief Executive John Halloran opened the discussion with reflections on the commonalities between the Social Investment Package and local case studies from ESN's recent work:

- seeing clients as 'co-producers' of services, by involving people in the assessment of their own needs and looking at shared solutions

- transforming services to be more based on prevention, rehabilitation and independent living in the community than on residential institutions or hospitals
- greater integration among local actors in order to avoid duplication of tasks and share back office functions, such as human resources or ICT
- greater use of electronic systems and welfare technology to manage case load and monitor expenditure and income per client or per unit.

➔ All practice examples from the conference can be found in our Practice Library [www.esn-eu.org/practice-library](http://www.esn-eu.org/practice-library)

"As institutions we can't unilaterally create public safety or address loneliness, we simply can't do it on our own. We need community, we need people behaving like citizens."

Cormac Russell,  
Managing Director of Nurture  
Development, Ireland

"If there is one thing that is vital to populations, it is health. Health care is one of the determinants, but only one. What people in social services do in their day job is absolutely vital to health."

Sir Michael Marmot, Director,  
University College London Institute  
of Health, United Kingdom





## 21<sup>st</sup> European Social Services Conference continued

The conference featured 24 workshops presenting innovative practices from across Europe and giving delegates the opportunity to discuss a wide range of factors that could transform lives and shape services.

“Although the increasing number of people needing services is clear, there is too little recognition of the significance and value of care workers.”

Juan Menéndez-Valdés,  
Director of Eurofound

### Investing in children and families

Accessible and effective social services for children and families were among the key concerns at the European Social Services Conference this year. From Sweden, the Municipality of Botkyrka presented its framework for social services and schools to work together. Here, schools are seen as an important resource in social services' work as children at risk spend a considerable amount of time in the school environment.

### Supporting young people

The situation of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is a particularly pressing problem in Europe. The workshop run by the German Federal Employment Agency, a new ESN member, presented its framework on how youth employment agencies, local job centres and social services can offer young people tailored assistance to facilitate their professional and social integration.

### Seeing beyond disability

A number of workshops looked at how services and local communities can work together with people with disabilities and mental health problems to ensure their wellbeing. The Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru in Wales presented a multi-agency project. It aims to safeguard the rights of people with disabilities, improving prevention and reporting of abuse by pooling the knowledge and resources of social, police and justice services in the local community.

### Active ageing and care

Health and social services for older people with care needs had a high profile at this year's conference. A workshop by representatives from the Government of Catalonia has given the impulse to promote local pilot partnerships between health and social care with the aim of spreading good practice that is based on evidence throughout the region.

➡ The 22<sup>nd</sup> European Social Services Conference will take place on 7-9 July in Rome. The theme will be 'Investing in people and communities. Social inclusion and social development'.



“Concentrate on the resources you do have rather than what is missing.”

Jukka Lindberg,  
Chair of the Association  
of Social Directors, Finland







## Troika Eurozone Bail-outs: What Impact on Social Services? Country Visits

In a series of country visits, ESN met with social services in countries affected by austerity policies. Visits to Greece, Ireland and Portugal reveal that a high price is being paid now by instituting cuts that are too deep and too fast to social protection systems that were already underdeveloped.

The “economic adjustment programmes” agreed by the Troika and national governments do not touch on specialist social work and care services. Rather, they focus on welfare benefits, employment services and health systems. In these countries, austerity measures and rising client numbers risk a move away from an enabling and empowering approach towards a traditional model of welfare assistance and emergency support, based on benefits and food banks.

### Ireland

Successive agreements between the Irish government(s) and the Troika have included severe wage and pension decreases in the public sector, besides a major on-going reform of welfare spending, to introduce synergies with employment activation. ESN members from Ireland point to the ‘employment control framework’ as the most significant impact on social services. This moratorium on recruitment and promotions in the public sector was first put in place by central government in 2009 to help stabilise health (and social care) spending, which had been expanding rapidly. Staff spending accounts for around 85% of the annual expenditure of the Health Service Executive – the national agency for health and social care. Its 2013 budget was set at €13.4 billion, a reduction of €3.3 billion compared with 2008. There are positive reforms in several areas, but the principal

challenge will be having the right staffing mix and volume to deliver change and meet the needs of the population.

### Greece

With high levels of unemployment, increased taxation, rising prices and cuts (of circa 60%) in government funding in social welfare programmes, the future does not look very promising. The public sector cannot hire new personnel to replace those leaving through early retirement, which is accelerating due to fear of worsening pension schemes. Following various scandals in mental health services, the government has embarked on a programme of psychiatric hospital closures, but it risks being derailed by underfunding. For the future there is a need for better integration of child mental health service networks involving schools, social services and other stakeholders. There have been a number of reforms to local government, reducing the number of authorities and improving their capacity to manage complex services. On its visit to Athens, the ESN delegation found some resistance to innovation and adaptation of traditional approaches, for example a reluctance to consider any form of copayment by users.



### Portugal

The news that 900 social canteens have been established in schools and other settings brought the scale and depth of the social emergency into sharp relief. The residential model of care continues to dominate in disability, elderly and child care services. It has become clear that austerity programmes have resulted in a drop in quality, in tightening eligibility criteria and in increases in the number of occupants per room in residential care. There is a risk that these measures will engender a return to a traditional model of welfare assistance, rather than one focused on developing people’s skills and potential. The institutionalisation of children is recognised as a challenge and the country lacks a well-developed foster care system as there is insufficient training and support for foster parents. Political and constitutional uncertainty over budget control measures make this a very difficult environment in which to plan for the future.

### EU Policy Response

The European Commission’s Communication on the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), launched in October this year, aims to strengthen monitoring of the impact of economic policy on social and employment policies in the Eurozone. The document errs on the side of technocratic timidity rather than practical concern for the dramatic impact

of the crisis on European citizens. Social indicators promoted by the communication are important, as are mutual learning and social dialogue. However, there is a disappointing absence of analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Troika bail-outs. In fact, the Commission’s view is that “a very high economic and social price has been paid” due to lack of earlier reform efforts in certain countries. While the EU is supporting investment in genuine reforms that will help deliver social inclusion, the communication on the social dimension of the EMU, we feel, must do more to advance this cause in those countries hit by the Eurozone crisis.



## European Semester 2013: A Balancing Act EU & National Policy

The European Union coordinates its economic, employment and social policies across Member States through an annual process known as the European Semester. Although economic policy dominates the Semester, country-specific recommendations on social services were issued this year to 21 Member States, notably in the areas of early childhood education and long-term care.

**“We believe you can stimulate and design more efficient and effective services through your dedication and with your innovative solutions.”**

**Concetta Cultrera, Deputy Head of Social Inclusion Unit, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission**

At its September meeting in Brussels, ESN's working group on 'Leadership, Performance, Innovation' reviewed the European Semester 2013 in ten Member States, including Finland, France, Italy and Spain. Jukka Lindberg from Finland expressed concerns about high inflation in the acute health care sector. He saw this as a challenge that the Finnish government and municipalities had to solve themselves, but thought the Commission should point it out.

Marie-Paule Martin-Blachais indicated disappointment with France's NRP because it failed to include any elements of a national plan on poverty and social exclusion, adopted only a few months previously. In her view, France is doing much more than the NRP says, which does not convey the fact that social services are indeed a priority in the country. She passed on to the Commission staff present the opinion of the French national council on poverty and social exclusion on the NRP.

Bruno Marcato reported that Italy's NRP did not give any priority to social services, but said that the major issue for Italy was regional disparity in the level of development of social services. This was something the Commission could raise with the government as a matter for the future, especially in light of the EU's own Regional Policy.

Comparing Spain's NRPs from the last three years, Carlos Santos Guerrero admitted there was more visibility of social services in 2013, but overall the document was still very focused on unemployment rather than the social consequences of the crisis. He also highlighted widespread concerns over a current government reform plan to transfer the duty to provide community social services from the local to the regional level, and presented a critical report by the Spanish National Association of Social Directors to Commission staff.

Overall the group was worried about the low profile of social services in the NRPs, despite the messages coming from the European level about their importance, notably in the context of the Social Investment Package. ESN advisor, Hugh Frazer, concluded that there was an imbalance between the economic, employment and social policy content of the Semester this year. ESN's Chief Executive John Halloran remarked that social problems have a substantial economic cost and that social protection is a large share of public expenditure (16.4% of EU-GDP excluding pensions). It was thus not justified, from an economic or social perspective, for governments to give social policy a low priority in the European Semester.



**“When problems increase, governments invest in people where they can measure ‘progress’, so I am worried about the most vulnerable. Maybe I am worried because I am working with the most vulnerable.”**

**Karine Lycops, Head of Social Welfare, City of Genk, Belgium**

**Key:** NRP National Reform Programme – the Member States' summary of current government policy





## Championing Social Services EU Policy Making

### **The European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care (EEG)** **Riga, 28 June, and Budapest, 17 October**

Working with the European Commission and public authorities across Member States, the EEG is running a series of national training seminars to support Member States in Central and Eastern Europe to use EU Structural Funds in 2014-2020 to close institutions and develop community-based services. ESN attended and contributed to seminars in Latvia and Hungary; we also supported members from national, regional and local government to take part in the training in a number of other countries. In Latvia, ESN member Martins Moors from Riga City Council highlighted the importance of bringing the local government perspective into the dialogue with the European Commission and national authorities. In Hungary, stakeholders discussed the importance of ensuring the sustainability of the deinstitutionalisation process.

### **EU Joint Action on Mental Health and Well-being**

ESN joined a new initiative launched under the EU Health Programme to address key issues in reaching the targets of the Europe 2020 strategy. The Joint Action builds on recommendations from the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being and Council

Conclusions in reaction to the Pact in 2011. Representing managers of public mental health services across social and health care, ESN is a prominent stakeholder in the Advisory Committee of the Joint Action, alongside 48 other partners in 30 countries. Over the course of the next years, 14 ESN members will participate in three areas of work: mental health in children and adolescents, community mental health care, and integrating mental health in all policies. On 10-11 October, ESN's Alfonso Lara Montero and three members, Ingvor Justinussen from the Faroe Islands, Indrek Sooniste from Estonia and Pablo Garcia Cubillana from Andalucía, Spain, contributed to the Lithuanian Presidency Conference 'Mental Health: Challenges and Possibilities'. At the event Alfonso Lara Montero highlighted that, given its personal, social and economic impact, mental health should be a major concern across all policy making areas, not only in welfare and health systems.

### **Welfare Reform for Active Inclusion of Young People with Health Problems or Disabilities** **The Hague, Netherlands, 17 January**

ESN's Chief Executive John Halloran contributed to a conference to launch a new Eurofound report on active inclusion for vulnerable young people. He spoke up for the role of regional and local government in the successful implementation

of inclusion and employment policies for people with disabilities, including those with mental ill health. He stressed the need for local partnerships involving health, education, employment and social services together with business, transport and housing. He added that there were many examples of successful practice such as moving from traditional supply-led training to placing young people in demand-led initiatives from local employers, moving from institutionalised, sheltered workshops to mainstream employment, and from a compensation culture to one of participation and integration.

### **More Years, Better Lives – EU Research Agenda**

ESN joined the Societal Advisory Board of the Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) 'More Years, Better Lives'. This is a partnership between fifteen European governments which seek to enhance coordination between European and national research programmes on demographic change. Its purpose is to develop a Scientific Research Agenda which would encompass the potential and challenges of demographic change. JPI Chair Dr. Marja Vaarama said that ESN and the JPI "share a concern for research and policies which promote the inclusion of all people (...) and recognise the essential role of social services and networks for sustainable solutions." Other members include the Council of European

Municipalities and Regions and AGE Platform Europe. ESN's Chair Lars-Göran Jansson stressed that the research to be conducted had to be useful to policy makers and service managers in social care and health.

### **EU Consultation on Long-term Care** **Brussels, 29 April**

ESN took part in a workshop of the Social Protection Committee's (SPC) working group on ageing to help prepare a policy makers' manual on long-term care based on Member States' experience and knowledge. ESN's Policy Director Stephen Barnett joined other guest experts, Commission officials and national government representatives. He questioned the use of the phrase "long-term care", given the Commission's own focus on prevention (active ageing, age-friendly environments) and rehabilitation. He shared lessons from ESN members' practice experience about: shifting away from acute medical care to home-care and prevention; involving service users in planning and delivery; and integrated case-management across health and social care. ESN awaits the publication of the SPC report with great interest and hopes it will offer a roadmap towards a sustainable model of care for older people in Europe.







## Championing Social Services EU Policy Making continued

### EU Social Investment Conference Leuven, Belgium, 2-3 May

ESN's Chief Executive John Halloran and Vice-chair Christian Fillet, together with Danish ESN member Steinar Eggen Kristensen, were present at a major European conference about the implementation of the European Commission's Social Investment Package. The aim of the conference was to discuss how to reform European welfare states to focus on social investment whilst they are under financial pressure. Steinar Eggen Kristensen made a presentation about how his municipality Aarhus dealt with a 20% rise in demand for social services by empowering service users and developing community-based care solutions that focused on outcomes. He highlighted one example: "We invested 3 million Euro in the training and support of foster parents to reduce the use of institutional child care services – which also saved 7.5 million Euro in one year."

### Fighting Poverty in Europe – What Role for Regions and Cities?

**Brussels, 29 May**  
ESN took part in the Committee of the Regions' conference together with more than 250 participants, including policy makers from all levels of government. Europe's regional and local authorities are responsible for around one fifth of government expenditure for social protection and services, and therefore play an important



role in combating poverty. ESN's Stephen Barnett presented alongside representatives of the Commission, the Committee of the Regions, the European Anti-Poverty Network and the European Social Observatory in a workshop on social investment. He reported that local and regional social services invest in people's capacities over the life-cycle, from childhood right through to later life. However, he noted that budget pressures were making it harder for them to do so given the high demand for the most basic services and benefits. Social services are responding with a mix of short-term cost control measures and more strategic measures to redesign services.

### Peer Review: Dignity First – Priorities in Reform of Care Services Stockholm, 25-27 September

The review was organised by the Swedish Ministry of Health and Welfare to discuss its recent reform on free choice for older people and quality registers to improve the quality of care. ESN was represented by its member Alan Baird, Chief Social Work Adviser at the Scottish Government, and Lisa Schönenberg from the Secretariat. Participants discussed how their national care systems could balance formal and family care, and promote innovation and rehabilitation. They also looked at how to use modern

technology in elderly care and how to measure quality care services. ESN emphasised the need to redesign local services around the needs of the users by shifting care into the community, together with preventative and enabling-service approaches – this would help to balance quality care and sustainable public finances.

**"I took three lessons from managing a reduction of the social services budget in my city. 1. You need a professional vision; 2. You have to be clear about priorities and use evidence where possible; 3. You have to build political support with the mayor and councillors."**

Steinar Eggen Kristensen,  
Director of Social Services,  
Denmark



# A Dynamic and Diverse Network New Members

ESN is growing year-on-year to reflect the diversity of social services across Europe. With 17 new organisations in 2013, ESN now has 100 members.



## Sharing Knowledge and Experience Working with Members

Throughout the year, ESN has supported members in the exchange of knowledge at national and European events, creating opportunities for them to share their own experiences and learn from others.

### Developing Social Services in Kosovo Brighton and London, 22-23 January

During a visit organised by ESN, delegates from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Kosovo met ESN's John Halloran to explore ways of working together, as well as other experts in social services in the United Kingdom. In London they visited the Centre for Workforce Intelligence, a new ESN member, where Rhidian Hughes presented a model for workforce planning in the social and health care sector. A meeting with researchers from London School of Economics shed light on the funding and local provision of social care services in England. In Brighton, the delegates visited a social enterprise that creates sustainable jobs and training for disadvantaged people. They also heard about the development of the British welfare state and the recent development in the UK labour market policy from the Institute for Employment Studies.

### Integrating Health and Social Care in Scotland Crieff, United Kingdom, 14-15 March

ESN participated in a seminar organised by the Association of Directors of Social Work to discuss the different approaches to integrating health and social care in the UK and Europe. ESN members Andrew Lowe from the Scottish Borders

Council and Alexis Jay from the Scottish Government presented their views on how to develop high quality professional leaders in health and social care partnerships. ESN's John Halloran offered a European perspective on the issue, highlighting the role of the Social Investment Package to support the integration between services by promoting more efficient, effective and sustainable social protection systems across Europe.

### 30 Years of Decentralisation in France Angers, France, 26-27 March

Representatives from central and local government, universities, institutes and associations participated in this major congress. It explored questions about the social fabric, users' empowerment and the diversity of social welfare. Social spending by the French departments had risen sharply in a number of areas (job-seeker's allowance, children in care, social housing) over the last decade or more, contrasting with shrinking revenue and causing real concern about the sustainability of the model. ESN's John Halloran spoke on the future of social services in Europe in light of the crisis and remarked: "Your debate rejoins that of colleagues across Europe as to how we might reconfigure the social contract, and we seek to ensure that social values are not lost, but rather re-energised for the next decade."



The 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.



## Sharing Knowledge and Experience Working with Members continued

### Peer Review on Homeless Policy in Dublin Dublin, 4-5 April

During the fourth HABITACT peer review, participants from ten cities analysed the Dublin 'Pathway to Home' model and compared it with other local models with a particular focus on Edinburgh, Espoo, Bucharest, Amsterdam, Odense and Bolzano. The meeting brought together 30 participants from European municipalities and organisations, including three ESN members: Daniel López Muñoz from the Autonomous Community of Galicia; Alexej Paoli from the Municipality of Bolzano, Italy; and Chris Kuypers, from the LCGW in the Netherlands. Discussions focused on evidence-based policy, consensus-based governance arrangements, needs assessment and outcomes evaluation, person-centred and case management approaches, as well as housing-led approaches.

### Europe's Regions Faced by Crisis – Assembly of European Regions Summit Paris, 17 May

The summit gathered 250 decision makers from European, national and regional government, as well as representatives from the business and banking sector. Martial Milaret, ESN Treasurer, was invited to share lessons from ESN's work on the impact of the crisis and social services' responses. He highlighted that

in many countries short-term cost-saving measures (e.g. staff reductions) and long-term strategic reforms (e.g. focus on prevention and rehabilitation) have formed social services' response to budgetary pressure. He placed particular emphasis on continuing efforts to develop and maintain person-centred community-based services.

### Social Services in Romania: Partnerships for Community Care Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 27-28 May

The International Social Services Conference in Romania, organised by the Municipality of Cluj-Napoca with support from ESN, brought together delegates from across Romania and Europe to share examples of successful partnerships in developing community social services. ESN members Christian Fillet from Belgium, Philip Cotterill from the United Kingdom, Chris Kuypers from the Netherlands and Erika Stark from Romania shared their experiences of working in partnerships. The Open Society Foundation, the United Nations Development Fund and UNICEF also presented successful case studies of partnerships with local social services. Other themes featured at the conference included the use of European funds, the transition to community care and social inclusion of Roma population.

### Union of Baltic Cities Meeting on Community Care Tartu, Estonia, 30-31 May

"How do we build up community-based services for vulnerable groups?" was one of the key questions at the meeting of the Commission on Health and Social Affairs, organised by a new ESN member, Tartu City Government in Estonia, and attended by ESN's Lisa Schönenberg. The aim of the meeting was to exchange local good practices of community-based services in the Baltic Sea area for different service user groups, such as people with disabilities, older people, children and families, and homeless people. The practice examples included the use of technology at home, new forms of citizen engagement and cooperation of services. Delegates also discussed the importance of equal cooperation between the welfare state, communities and service users, and their responsibility to set up community-based services.

ESN members can access exclusive news and resources, and participate in discussions on our Members' Area [www.esn-eu.org/members-login](http://www.esn-eu.org/members-login)



"In our work of protecting and supporting the most vulnerable people in our society, especially in times of austerity, we cannot rely on one-sided solutions anymore. When different actors from social services, NGOs and the private sector work together towards a common goal, they contribute to a more active and caring community."

Christian Fillet, ESN Vice-chair



Building for the Future  
Governance

Strong leadership is essential during difficult times. 2013 has been another challenging year for many of our members, but ESN's Board has shown more commitment than ever in sharing their experience with colleagues across Europe and developing the organisation's vision for the years to come.

Throughout the year, Board members have taken an active lead in supporting the development of social services in countries facing particular challenges, by undertaking visits in Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain and sharing their knowledge with colleagues in Romania. Outreach visits to Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Germany and France were also undertaken to seek new collaborations and help grow our diverse network.

At a time when social services in Europe are increasingly being developed, managed and delivered through partnerships across sectors, the Board helped shape ESN's vision for developing new partnerships into the future. They also contributed to outlining ESN's strategy and secure funding for the next four years.

ESN's Annual General Meeting took place in Dublin, prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> European Social Services Conference. A record number of members have participated at the meeting and had a chance to hear from the Business Committee and ESN staff about the network's recent and planned activities.



As our Policy Director, Stephen Barnett, moves on to a new challenge in 2014, we would like to thank him for his service to ESN and wish him well for the future.

Board Representatives at the Members' Forum in Brussels	
From left to right	
Aðalsteinn Sigfússon	
Stephen Barnett	
Philip Cotterill	
Harri Jokiranta	
Ernst Schedler	
Mireia Llorens Poch	
Luc Kupers	
Carlos Santos Guerrero	
Roland Giraud	
Franco Moretto	
Jesús Marcial Méndez Magán	
Antonietta Bellisari	
Karl Gudmundsson	
Noel Mulvihill	
Miran Kerin	
Christian Fillet	
John Halloran	
Lars-Göran Jansson	



## Setting Priorities for the Future Members' Forum

On 14-15 November ESN held a special meeting in Brussels with representatives from its member organisations from 28 countries. The event was a unique opportunity for members to celebrate the network's achievements in the last years and shape ESN's priorities for the next period 2014-2017.

### ESN's working themes for 2014-2017

- Social Planning and Commissioning
- Investing in Children's Services
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Research and Evidence-based Practice
- Ageing and Care
- Independent Living and Active Inclusion
- Public Service Leadership and Innovation
- Social Dimension of Europe 2020

In the first part of the meeting, ESN members looked together at the main activities with the network during the past three years, sharing their experiences from our recent seminars, working groups and training, and reflecting on their own work.

The second session looked at the European social, political and economic context with the help of Stijn Hoorens, Associate Director at RAND Europe, and Ana Xavier from DG Economic and Financial Affairs at the European Commission. This session prompted a discussion about sustainability of public finances, service design and other key issues affecting ESN's future work.

Looking into the future, the second day focused on defining priorities for the next four-year cycle. As a greater number of citizens are at risk of poverty and social exclusion due to a combination of factors including age, deprivation, ethnicity, disability or poor health, members worked in groups to identify key issues and questions for social services throughout the life-course/according to service user groups. How should ESN work on those priorities in 2014-2017 was the next question that members tackled, looking at ways to improve working together within the network, increase members' awareness of EU policy and funding opportunities, and encourage the integration of research and evidence into ESN's work.



**"I have had close to eight fantastic years at ESN and I am pleased to have played my part in its growth and success these last years. ESN has a strong reputation in Brussels, many committed members and a great team at the Brighton office."**

**Stephen Barnett, Policy Director**





Thank you to members >

**We would like to thank ESN members who played a key role in our working groups, seminars and projects over the last three years:**

**Leadership, Performance, Innovation working group:**

Bruno Marcato, Carlos Santos Guerrero, Michaela Sopová, Guido Kläser, John Powell, Jukka Lindberg, Karine Lycops, Monica Ghițu, Marie-Paule Martin-Blachais, Nenad Ivanišević, Steinar Eggen Kristensen, Stella Vőisdóttir

**Developing Community Care training programme:** Ágnes Csicsely, Artur Urant, Daniel Rychlik, David Towell, Davor Dominkuš, Juraj Marendiak, Katarzyna Komon, Lenka Varchlova, Lidia Ujanowska, Mária Pál, Miklós Szentkatolnay, Milan Šveřepa, Mirosław Cangar, Petr Severa, Piotr Nowak-Skyrpan, Sona Gouthova, Tereza Kloučková, Tünde Török, Ivana Prihonska, István Kovács, Radka Soukupová, Irakli Nadareishvili, Lorenzo Rampazzo, Ines Bulic

**Ageing and Care workshop:** Andrea Kallinis, Angelika Rosenberger-Spitz, Anke Böckenhoff, Hanna Ahonen, Jim Thomas, Lise Burgade, Mikael Johansson, Reinhard Pohlmann, Sergio Murillo, Toni Dedeu, Wendy Absillis

**Investing in Children Services project:** Máire Igoe, Pär Alexandersson, Paul Harrison, Sonya Blazheva-Truykova

**Poverty and Social Exclusion workshop:** Britta Spilker, Gunnar Sandholt, Elisabeth Rahmberg, Alina Mrejeru, Dragiša Dabetić

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**For service on the Board:** Aðalsteinn Sigfússon, Antonietta Bellisari, Cate Hartigan, Ernst Schedler, Franco Moretto, Guido Magrini, Harri Jokiranta, Lotta Persson, Luc Kipers, Massimiliano Barresi, Mario Modolo, Miran Kerin, Mireia Llorens Poch, Peter MacLeod, Philip Cotterill, Roland Giraud, Simone Giotto, Soledad Castro Diaz, Stefan Spatz, Beatriu Aguer, Gunnar Sandholt, Harry Stevenson, Karl Gudmundsson, Jesús Marcial Méndez Magán, Marina Mucciarelli, Noel Mulvihill, Ole Pass, René Paas

**European Social Services Conferences:** Rafael del Pino López, Alan Rosenbach, Monica De Coninck, Jüri Kõre, Terry Madden

**Innovative Responses for Challenging Times Spring Seminar 2011:** Cate Hartvig Kristiansen, Eija Stengård, Matthias Schulze-Böing, Tibor Tóth

**Investing in Children Autumn Seminar 2011:** Ferenc Sidlovics, Marta Korintus, Päivi Lindberg, Patricia Kearney, Yvan Ferrier, Elisabeth Rahmberg, Julien van Geertsom

**Vulnerable Youth in Transition Spring Seminar 2012:** Aldo Forte, Sandra Verhauwert, Raniero Di Filippis, Sandra Hagemeyer, Paul Clark

**Retaining and Regaining Independence and Inclusion in Later Life Autumn Seminar 2012:** Barbara Kahler, Karen Heebøll, Daniel López Muñoz, Vanda Santos, Walter Tattermusch

**Choice and Control for Service Users Spring Seminar 2013:** Camilla Blomqvist, Martina Plohovits, Indrek Rohla, Ellen Vogt, Jaana Viemeiö

**And participation in other national and EU events and projects:** Chris Kuypers, Alan Baird, Jouni Nummi, Alexis Jay, Alexej Paoli, Eva Garcia Brandariz, Pilar Aldea Lacambra, Fanny Bertrand, Mikko Oranen, Meena Enawalla, Eva Garcia, Sendi Murgel, Dubravka Hrovatić, Elena Echeberria Ochoa de Alda, Pablo Garcia Cubillana, Indrek Sooniste, Ingvor Justinussen, Lucy Butler, Terry Dafter, James Cross, Eithne O'Donnell, Aileen McDonnell, Bjarta Vilhelm, Susana Garcia Heras, Susann Kroworsch, Gerardo Favaretto

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**And former ESN staff for their service to the organisation:** Jeta Bejtullahu, Dorota Tomalak, Stephen Barnett

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