



The Social Services Network for Europe

Annual Review 2016



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The European Social Network (ESN) brings together people who plan, manage and deliver local 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 and transfer of knowledge and experience.

Introduction

Looking Forward

Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

In light of recent tensions and the rise of populism across Europe, we are concerned at the negative portrayal of immigrants and refugees and the lack of recognition of the achievements of democracy, peace and cooperation and we fear the increasing economic and social divisions opening up across Europe.

As the independent network for local public social services in Europe for more than nearly 20 years, the European Social Network (ESN) brings together those responsible for managing, funding, implementing and evaluating public service and thereby contributing at the European level the expertise of those responsible for implementing public social policy at local level.

This knowledge exchange and policy contribution between us, in our view, has never been more important than today, which is, for example, why we created interesting debates at our annual conference on, working with refugees, service integration and household debt.

As Chair of ESN, I place importance on strong and engaged governance and following the UK referendum, ESN is reviewing its operational strategy to ensure it continues to provide the very best service to its members and works as a strong partner to the European Commission, the Parliament and Members States.

I have every confidence in our members and the secretariat to ensure we have a sustainable European future driven by our shared social values.

With my best wishes,



Christian Fillet
Chair of ESN

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Introduction

Looking Forward

Letter from the Chief Executive



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the ESN Annual Review.

Moving towards our 25th European Social Services Conference, I think back to our first project on personal budgets *Towards a People's Europe*. Still relevant today, as a 'people first' approach continues to drive our programme of learning, exchange and development.

In 2016, members exchanged ideas and experiences on ageing and disability in Mechelen, Sofia and Brighton and discussed young people and criminal justice in Athens. At the European Parliament in May, ESN's 14 country report on 'Investing in children's services' was launched with the support of MEP Nathalie Griesbeck and Gøsta Esping-Andersen a leading figure in worldwide research on early years.

This year we worked with the European Commission on its preparation of the Social Pillar and with both EU Dutch and Slovak Presidencies. We organised the European Social Services Conference in The Hague and our policy seminar 'Investing in the social services workforce', in Bratislava with the Ministers for Social Affairs from both Slovakia and Malta.

In late November I addressed a conference at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg which posed the challenging topical question: Where are Europe's values? Reflecting on ESN's work in 2016, I argued for an understanding of societal inclusion which transforms the lives of those with disabilities, mental ill health, older people, disadvantaged young people and refugees so that they can participate as full and equal citizens.

I would like to thank the European Commission for its support and I hope you will find this review inspiring.

See you in Valletta!

John Halloran
ESN Chief Executive

Learn Current Policy and Practice Trends



Dennis Søndergård
Senior Advisor
Welfare
Technology
Denmark

“I plan to include the knowledge I have gained from ESN’s seminar on the social services workforce in my daily work promoting innovative new ways of delivering social care in the Nordic countries.”



Learn

Investing in Children's Services, Improving Outcomes

Study launch at the European Parliament

Representatives from more than 20 countries across Europe came together at the European Parliament in Brussels at the end of May 2016 for the launch of Investing in Children's Services, Improving Outcomes. This is the final report of a three-year study of children's services in 14 European countries which assesses the implementation of the principles put forward in the 2013 European Commission's Recommendation, 'Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage'.

The launch was held over two days. Day one saw the participation of all ESN members from the 14 countries that participated in the project. Day two was the formal launch of the report, which took place at the European Parliament with a wider group in symposium, hosted by Nathalie Griesbeck MEP, vice-chair of the European Parliament intergroup on children's rights.

Opening the event at the Parliament, Ms Griesbeck reminded the audience that meetings that bring local expertise in managing, financing, implementing and evaluating services are not frequently brought up at the European Parliament. According to Hugh Frazer, European Social Policy Network Coordinator, "there was a risk that not enough weight would be given to the services pillar of the Commission's Recommendation; with this

work, the gap has now been filled". "This is probably the most comprehensive report on cross-comparison of children's policies and services in Europe today", said Caroline Vink from the Netherlands Youth Institute, who spoke about the decentralisation of children's services in her country.

Speakers and attendees shared and discussed best practice in children's services with a particular focus on two issues: reform of child protection in its broadest sense; and care and support for unaccompanied children arriving in Europe as refugees.

The report is based on work with 14 European countries over the study period, identifying strengths and gaps in children's services and producing proposals for improvement in line with the Recommendation. Children's services in Europe are currently facing serious challenges, which require an integrated response across agencies, including the arrival of high numbers of unaccompanied children and the need to successfully meet increasing demands with decreasing resources.

The key components of an investment strategy for children's services include leadership, an integrated approach to service planning and provision, supporting the workforce and moving from an output-based approach to an outcome-focused one.

"The report, with its broad overview of social services, health care and education in many countries, is a great achievement. The meeting focused on the main issues from the report, and gave some new perspectives on these plus opportunities for more informal discussions."

Pär Alexandersson,
The National Board
of Health and Welfare,
Sweden





“Among the main strengths of the meeting was the ease at which participants were able to share ideas with colleagues and open up about questions and challenges that they were facing in their own countries.”

Alexandra Simoes,
Social Security Institute,
Portugal



Learn Investing in Children's Services, Improving Outcomes

Study launch at the European Parliament

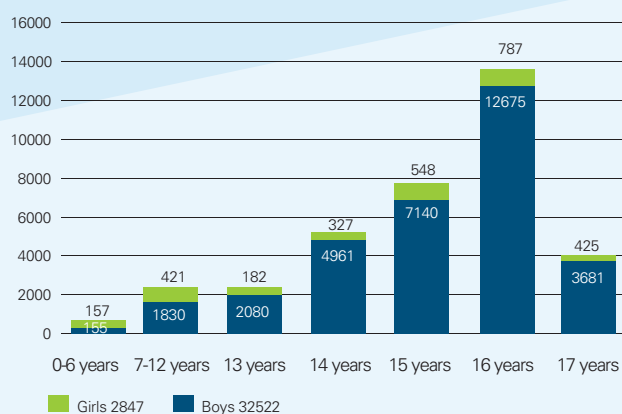
With local authorities increasingly under financial pressure and the need to demonstrate 'economic gains', discussions focused on the strengths and gaps identified in the study as the basis for moving forward. The gaps identified were the under-representation of poor families in early childcare services and the need to reinforce professional expertise, improved coordination and service evaluation to ensure equal access to children's services. The need to shift the evaluation process from an output focus, which is usually requested by national governments and the EU (e.g. on EU Structural Funds expenditure) to an outcome-focused one.

The development of an integrated approach within children's services was highlighted to advance outcomes for children. For instance, the audience heard about new developments in integrated packages of children's services, consisting of financial benefits and community-based services.

Children's services in Europe are in transition: from reaction to prevention; from institutional care to community-based permanence; and from measuring outputs to gauging outcomes. Presentations and debate at the launch of the report 'Investing in children's services, improving outcomes', showed that these transitions remain strongly on course, notwithstanding the severe resource challenges and the arrival in Europe of tens of thousands of unaccompanied migrant children.

Looking forward, Alfonso Lara Montero, ESN policy director and manager of the research project behind the report, forecasts that the trends identified by the work and discussed at the launch would continue. Frameworks, strategies and service delivery should focus increasingly on outcomes; services would move more and more towards integrated models of joint delivery, possibly funded by joint budgets; and evaluation would necessarily involve appraisal and feedback by young users of services and their families in an emerging form of co-production.

**Number of asylum seekers
unaccompanied boys and girls 2015**



Source: Graham Owen, Director of Social Services, Municipality of Trosa and FSS board member Brussels 30th May 2016



Investing in Children's Services, Improving Outcomes is available here: esn-eu.org/publications



View the videos on unaccompanied child migrants here: esn-eu.org/videos

Join the Conversation



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Social Services in Europe



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Investing in the Social Services Workforce: Building a Caring Society

The annual ESN seminar was organised in Bratislava, Slovak Republic on 15 – 16 November in collaboration with the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This year over 100 participants from 29 countries came together to share knowledge and expertise.

The discussions linked key challenges such as demographic ageing, fiscal constraints, and the growing complexity of needs to the reform of the social services workforce across Europe. Policy and practice examples were presented on the themes of mobility, recruitment, planning, training and managing the social services workforce, which is believed to account for 5–10% of the total European economy.

With social care and social support needs expected to increase, recruiting a diverse, trained and caring workforce is proving difficult for many European member states. Some of the key issues raised during the seminar included:

- Gender disparity: with 78% of the workforce being female.
- The need to adapt training to current social needs.
- Labour shortages and unfilled vacancies.
- A lack of mutual recognition of qualifications across the EU.
- Language and cultural barriers.
- A general lack of appeal towards the profession.
- Ageing populations (including the workforce).

The first day looked at gaps between education and training and how to ensure the professionalisation of the social services workforce. It was recognised that the social services workforce generally comprises two tiers of professionals. On the one hand, there is a high-skilled group consisting of social workers, occupational therapists and social educators who generally hold an undergraduate university degree; while on the other hand, there are low-skilled workers (including care workers), some of whom have no formal qualifications. According to Colum Conway, CEO of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC), 50% of all care workers in Northern Ireland do not have a qualification.

Professionalisation of the workforce was seen as a necessary goal to ensure quality of service provision for users, but also to ensure that workers have the required competencies to cope with the demands of their jobs in a sector which is characterised by stress-related illness, burnout and high turnover. These were identified as interpersonal relationship building, language training and training on 'local cultures of care' or cultural sensitivity. There was also a strong focus on encouraging registration so that professionals can access training and create a sense of professional identity.

“We must remember to learn from and identify good practice examples from other countries. There is value in linking rich and grounded case studies from across the EU (and beyond) to a more macro-analysis. This supports meaningful understanding and engagement”.

Kerry Musselbrook,
Institute for Research
and Innovation in
Social Services,
IRISS, Scotland



In terms of social work training, Prof. Marion Laging (Applied University of Esslingen, Germany), noted that the gap between theory and practice was very wide and that service users needed to be involved in the design and delivery of university modules."

When compared with the health sector, the social care sector does not have the same success in recruiting skilled workers from other EU member states to fill labour shortages. Both Doede Ackers (European Commission) and Dr Shereen Hussein (King's College London) conceded that this was partly due to a lack of harmonisation of qualifications across the EU.

It emerged from the discussions that standardisation of qualifications would contribute to higher mobility and would help to fill the recruitment gap.



Listen to podcasts from the seminar in ESN's podcast library esn-eu.org/audio/index.html or download these from our SoundCloud page soundcloud.com/european-social-network

Learn

Investing in the Social Services Workforce: Building a Caring Society

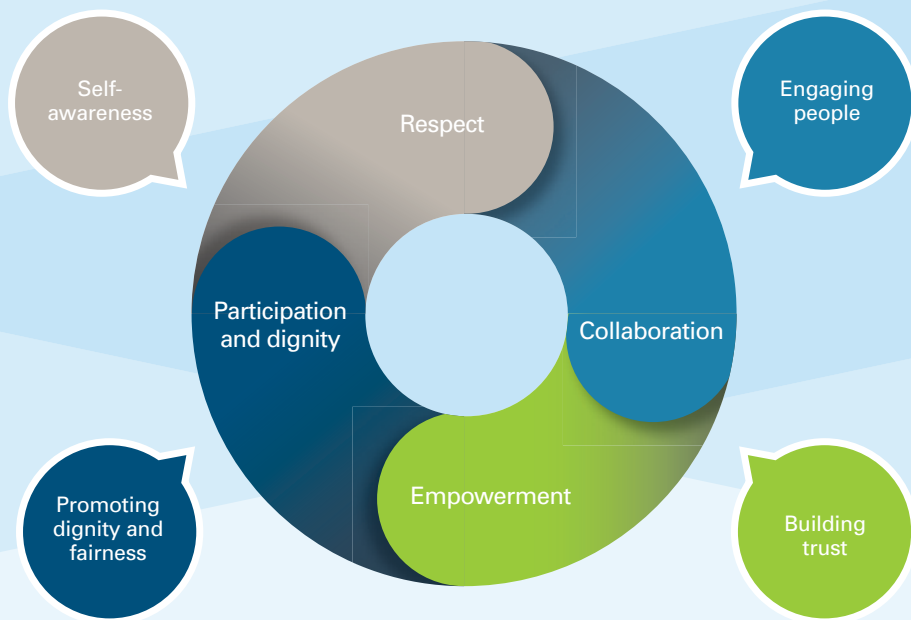
Key messages

Key messages coming out of the discussions at the seminar were:

1. Planning should account for the diversity of workers within the social services workforce.
2. All professionals should be registered so that they can access further training and development.
3. Qualifications should be harmonised across the EU28.
4. Recruitment programmes should focus on diversifying the workforce to include men, young people and migrant workers.
5. Training should focus on all skills needed to perform the job, including cultural, language and skills-based training.

This seminar saw ESN inviting both members and non-members to take part in both days of the event. For those unable to travel, we also provided live web streaming, which saw 176 people from 27 countries tuning in from across Europe and beyond.

Integration of values, skills and knowledge



See speaker videos
from the event here:
esn-eu.org/videos/index.html

Share Effective Practice to Promote Quality Services



Agy Pasek
Gloucestershire
Learning Disability
Partnership

“Attending the fourth meeting of the ESN working group on Disability gave me the opportunity to meet new people and see different perspectives. Being a part of this working group has been a key contributor to my job satisfaction and I would be keen to help influence the topics of future meetings.”



Share ESN Working Groups Ageing and Care, Disability

Launched in 2014, both ESN working groups completed their activities in 2016, with two meetings each, and a common final session on planning services for people with disabilities in older age. Among the issues covered this year were service user involvement, quality assurance, social care workforce and technology.

More than 50 practice examples were submitted by ESN members and analysed ahead of each meeting. In doing so, the ESN secretariat was supported by academics and independent consultants.

The workforce in services for older people

Matching this years' crosscutting theme on the social services workforce (see pages 12–13), both working groups looked at investing in the workforce as a key element of service quality assurance. At its fourth meeting on 11–12 February in Mechelen (Belgium), the working group on ageing and care discussed the areas of recruitment and retention, support for care professionals, safeguarding and caring for very vulnerable old people (such as those with dementia or Alzheimer's disease), and personal and home support.

Our host for this meeting, the Sociaal Huis Mechelen, gave the group a tour of their residential and assisted living facilities, which sparked discussions around how care services for older people should look in the future. An informal carer from a North African background talked to the group about her experience of taking on a caring responsibility while working and looking after her own children. She explained that older people from her background are often more reluctant to seek services, partly because they often have less information about what support is available. Exchanging experiences with other informal carers is very helpful and can alleviate the isolation carers may feel, she told us.

The group concluded that national as well as local care strategies should include both formal and informal care and that local authorities have a dual role in supporting people who face particular challenges, such as people who care for people with dementia or Alzheimer's disease, while also supporting migrants working in long-term care.

Service user involvement

User involvement and service co-production were discussed at our disability working group meeting in Sofia (Bulgaria), on 5 April. Together with three service users from Bulgaria and the UK, ESN members discussed ways to involve them in the design, implementation and evaluation of services.

Faced with growing needs and expectations in a challenging financial context, the City of Aarhus (Denmark) has embedded service user involvement in planning the transformation of its disability services through assemblies and co-production workshops involving users, their families and the wider community.

As part of their 'Building Better Lives' policy, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) in the UK worked with a local user-led organisation of people with learning disabilities to fully co-produce a number of policy and services, such as their local employment strategy. From costly services leading to poor outcomes for people, GCC has progressed to a more cost-efficient way of commissioning training, crisis support and early intervention.



All practices have
been uploaded onto
our online practice library
esn-eu.org/practices/index.html

“Exchanging experiences with experts from other countries has enriched my perspectives on service user involvement in Europe for people with disabilities.”

Vanya Pandieva,
Centre for Independent
Living Sofia,
Bulgaria

The seven components of workforce health promotion of the Municipality of Östersunds, Sweden



Participants were asked to think about a recipe for successful user involvement. This would include: providing accessible information (e.g. through easy-to-read formats and pictograms), building trust, ensuring that staff have the time and ability to listen to users, and promoting professional values, such as inclusion and personalisation.

Better services for a better life

Improving the quality of social services was the focus of both working groups' meeting on 11 October, in Brighton (UK). In 2010, the European Commission published a Voluntary Quality Framework for social services to improve the "capacity [of public authorities] to organise and provide high quality social services". Beyond technical and health-related aspects, the participation and autonomy of service users and the quality of the workforce were highlighted as crucial to improve services quality and eventually, users' quality of life.

Quality of the workforce

ESN's working group on disability looked specifically at the role of workforce in this process. A well-trained, caring – and cared for – staff is crucial to provide service users with adequate support as is the promotion of effective service user involvement.

In Ireland, the national Health Service Executive (HSE) created a toolbox to improve quality in its residential services. In Halmstad (Sweden), the social welfare department has put users' feedback and wellbeing at the centre of social work practice and quality assessments. The so-called 'feedback-informed model' has helped to improve the relationship between service users and providers. Evidence shows that this relationship contributes to improving general well-being for almost two thirds of service users.

Share ESN Working Groups Ageing and Care, Disability

As needs increase (notably due to increasing life expectancies among persons with disabilities) and users become increasingly involved in their care and support, social services managers, commissioners and providers face new challenges. These include adapting social workers' training to complex needs, changing professional culture and increasing flexibility and responsiveness.

Quality of community services for older people

In light of the focus on quality of residential services, the working group on ageing and care discussed how these services needed to be adapted into community services for older people, with a focus on service users' preferences and abilities and their social environment. Participants discussed the tension between risk prevention and personal autonomy of service users, and between general principles of quality and implementation of this in each individual context.

The Finnish National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) presented their self-monitoring plan that has been rolled out in private and public services across the country. This sets out the framework of principles in social care, but gives every organisation the flexibility to adapt it to their circumstances and way of working.

Ageing with a disability

On 12 October 2016, both ESN working groups met in Brighton for a joint session. The aim was to explore the implications of ageing with a disability, especially for people with learning disabilities.

Despite improving life expectancy and quality of life in older age, people with learning disabilities still die earlier than the average population. Existing policies often fall short of addressing their needs properly, which makes planning services especially challenging for this heterogeneous cohort with various needs and degrees of disability.

Around 25 participants gathered into groups to draft a personalised care plan work for four fictitious service users with various disabilities (autism, Down Syndrome, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities) facing additional challenges in older age, such as dementia or diabetes. For public social services, providing adequate support means balancing risk assessments with independent living, financial constraints and needs.



Technological innovation

The working group on ageing and care also discussed the role of technological solutions to address social challenges and improve the quality of community care services for older people. ESN members from Belgium and England presented their use of tablet computers and easy-to-use TV conferencing technology to enable socially isolated older people to communicate more with their friends and families and people in the community, to do their daily shopping and to be able to reach social services without having to leave the house.

The benefits of teleconsultations and 'virtual care' were presented by one of our Finnish members who emphasised the efficiency gains from using this technology in the City of Lathi. We also learned about the Scottish Social Services Council's Open Badge system that provides a systematic way of recognising practical skills. This encourages learning and enables employers to recognise the skills, beyond professional and academic qualifications, that are relevant to the job.

See innovation in practice at ESN's 25th anniversary conference in Malta
visit essc-eu.org



“The case study format used at the ageing and care working group meeting was a good way to explore cross-over issues in ageing and disability. I found the joint session on ageing with a disability extremely relevant.”

Karen Jackson,
Association of Directors
of Adult Social Services
(ADASS), and Hampshire
County Council,
United Kingdom

Next steps

The outputs of both working groups – analysed practice examples, discussions and background information will be used to produce toolkits in 2017.

More than 50 practice examples are available to download in our practice library. Members can access all materials and presentations in the ‘Projects’ section of the members’ area.

For more information about ESN’s work on disability and on ageing and care, please contact ESN Policy Officers Marianne Doyen (Disability) and Dorothea Baltruks (Ageing and Care).

Share Workshop Young Offenders in Europe Active Inclusion and Rehabilitation

On 11–12 July, ESN organised the workshop 'Young offenders in Europe: Active inclusion and rehabilitation' in Athens as part of our continuing work on vulnerable youth.

Participants learned that across Europe young offenders may live in very different settings which may include different age groups. Some may still be minors living with their families, while others are already young adults, who might have been in the juvenile system. Some of the challenges they face include mental health problems, low educational attainment, or discrimination in employment.

Participants shared experiences from family settings, therapy, schools, prisons, homes, or reintegration centres. Practice presentations about multi-professional teams in Brighton (United Kingdom) and Hämeenlinna (Finland) showcased the relevance of inter-sectoral cooperation and outreach into local communities. Examples from Kalix (Sweden) and Catalonia (Spain) focused on mental health and underlined the importance of psychosocial interventions for young offenders' development.

Greek speakers from the City of Athens, a prison school, a third sector service provider, and the Justice Ministry explained support for young offenders covering community support, supervision during trials, prison education, and assistance after release. There was emphasis on the cooperation between juvenile probation officers, prison teachers, social workers, legal counsellors, and mental health professionals.

Group discussions gave participants a chance to talk about 'what works for whom' in youth offending, notably when it comes to prevention and cooperation with social services. Key messages introduced the involvement of local authorities in 'whole system approaches' and the need to understand each young offender as a child in need.

Issues discussed at the workshop also included the high costs of public care and custody as well as reoffending rates. Discussions concluded that public authorities needed to invest in prevention and integration programmes specifically targeting young offenders and address their various complex needs.

"I think it's important to look more at evidence-based practices like our model for the intense, multidimensional home care of young offenders, as it covers many aspects of young offender's lives. I would also like to add that I'm very pleased with the structure and high quality of this workshop, it felt very efficient."

Andreas Gustafsson,
National Board for
Institutional Care
in Sweden

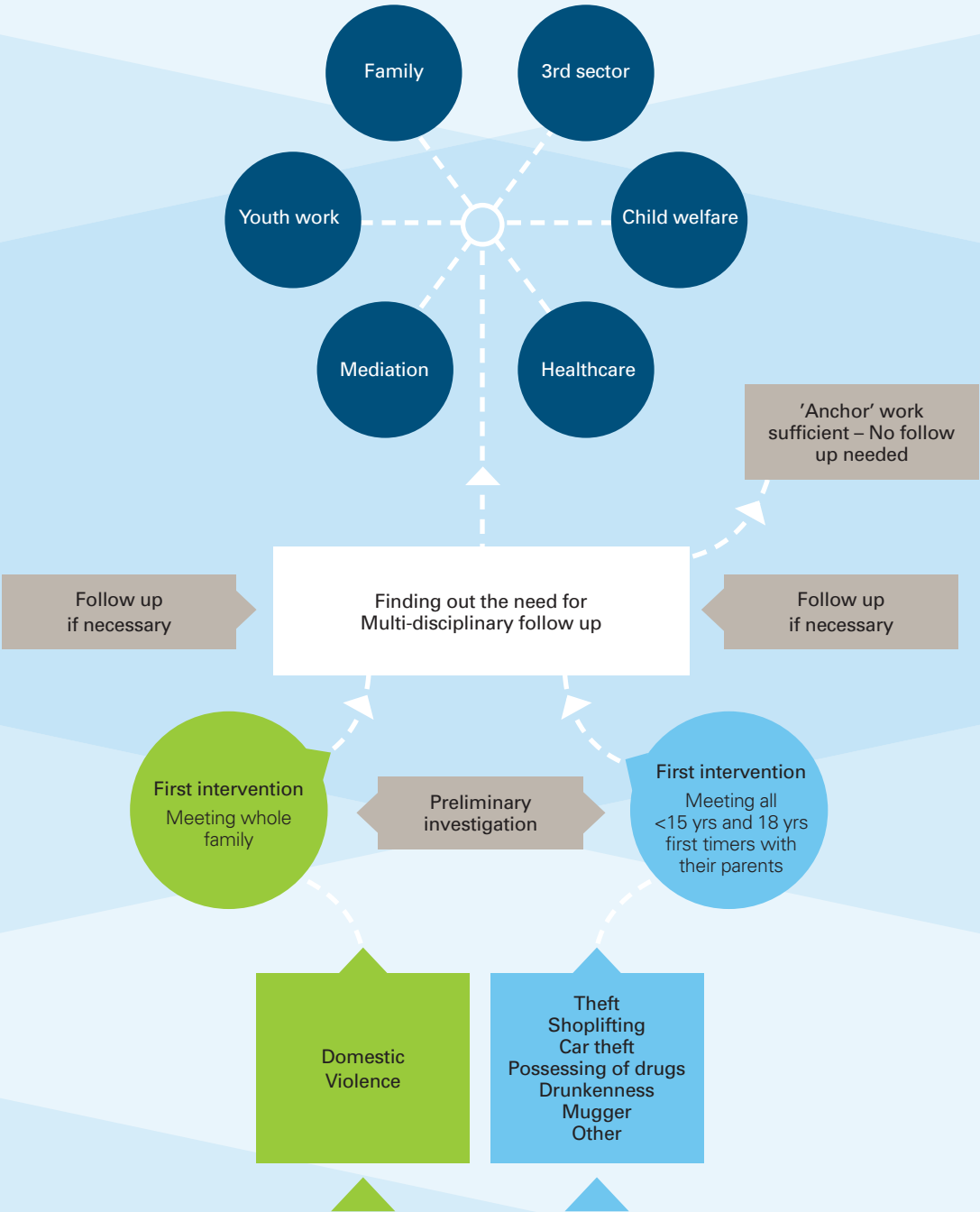
For more information about ESN's work on youth, please contact ESN policy officer: Kim Nikolaj Japing
kim.japing@esn-eu.org

Selected practices addressing youth offending are in the online practice library.
esn-eu.org/practices/index.html



Watch our video on 'Vulnerable youth in Europe' here: esn-eu.org/videos/54/index.html

Working procedures of the 'Anchor' team:
A model for multi-professional teams
against youth offending



Source: Presentation of Juha Kuningas and Jonna Laitonen from the 'Anchor' team (Municipality of Hämeenlinna, Finland) given in Athens on 11 July 2016

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25
YEARS

SHARING
KNOWLEDGE
IMPROVING
LIVES

Influence European and National Policy-Making



Jetta Klijnsma
Secretary of State
for Social Affairs
and Employment
The Netherlands

“The future is local. I want a future in which everyone participates, including the people who are facing difficulties. It is important to talk on a national and international level about our future, in doing so we have made important strides towards shaping that future.”



Influence Working at EU Level



Peer Reviews on social inclusion

Peer Reviews are a key instrument of cooperation between Member States in the field of social policies. ESN frequently contributes to these meetings with a comment paper and a presentation. In 2016, ESN participated in a peer review on Social Community Teams (SCTs) in The Netherlands, where we presented similar local initiatives across Europe and compared them to the local Dutch teams. ESN also contributed actively to a peer review on the local implementation of the Active Ageing Index in Germany, where we argued that service professionals and older people should be actively involved in the process of adapting and applying the AAI in their local area.

First Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth

On 21 March, the European Commission organised the Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth in Brussels, which brought together policy makers and civil society representatives to discuss what the EU can do to ensure that all citizens benefit from truly inclusive growth.

ESN CEO John Halloran addressed the workshop on the European Fund for Strategic Investment and Policy Director Alfonso Lara Montero acted as Rapporteur in the workshop on Active inclusion. ESN also organised a joint event on long-term unemployment with Eurocities and Eurodiaconia, at which Agy Pasek from Gloucestershire County Council presented their employment programme for people with disabilities.

Strategic Dialogue with the European Commission and stakeholders

ESN participates actively in the strategic dialogue meetings, which are organised by the European Commission. These meetings aim to provide the European Commission with a structured input from European networks on Commission's policies. In 2016, ESN participated in meetings on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative, the Pillar of Social Rights and the future of work and social welfare systems. At these meetings, we argued for specific provisions supporting social welfare systems that strive for people's empowerment in and with the community.



Implementation of European Commission's Country Specific Recommendations

In 2016, the European Commission issued Spain with a recommendation to improve cooperation between employment and social services in the framework of the European Semester. On 27-28 October, representatives from Spanish regional employment and social services, the ESF operating authorities and the central government met to discuss ways of implementing this recommendation. ESN's Policy Director Alfonso Lara Montero led a working group, which looked at practice examples of employment and social services coordination from our integrated services report and whether these could be implemented in the Spanish regions.

Contribution to European Commission's consultation on the Pillar of Social Rights

In 2015, European Commission's President Juncker announced that he would like to develop a European Pillar of Social Rights. On 8 March 2016, the European Commission put forward a preliminary outline of what should become the European Pillar of Social Rights and launched a consultation to gather stakeholders' views. Throughout 2016, the Commission has engaged in a debate with stakeholders on the content and role of the Pillar. The Commission organised a hearing on the future of social welfare and the role of the Pillar at which ESN participated on 30 June. ESN also submitted a response to the consultation, where we emphasised that the Pillar should recognise local authorities' duty of care along the life-cycle.

European Pillar of Social Rights

During 2016, ESN was actively involved in bilateral dialogues with the European Commission. Speaking at a hearing on the future of welfare systems in June, John Halloran recommended that the Pillar's provisions should resonate with the statutory duties of local authorities: working with vulnerable families, providing housing, protecting children from harm, safeguarding vulnerable adults with a disability, providing care and support for frail elderly people.

In December, ESN produced position policy paper on the subject, and responded to the Commission's online public consultation.



Download your copy of
ESN's Position Paper here:
[esn-eu.org/raw.
php?page=files&id=2338](http://esn-eu.org/raw.php?page=files&id=2338)

Understanding the employment transitions of care leavers across Europe

On 11 October, ESN's Policy Director Alfonso Lara Montero spoke at a seminar organised by SOS Children's Villages International to launch their recent report on employment transitions of young care leavers. A representative from the Public Centre for Social Welfare Bruges joined Alfonso, who highlighted in his presentation specific examples of integrated practices from Spain and France supporting care leavers in their transition to adulthood.

Exchanging insight about integrated care

On 23-25 May, ESN's Policy Director Alfonso Lara Montero was a plenary speaker at the 16th annual conference of the International Foundation for Integrated Care that took place in Barcelona. Over 800 delegates from all over the world attended the conference, which this year focused on enabling integrated health and social care. In his presentation, Alfonso drew on examples from across Europe to highlight lessons learnt in the integration process from the perspective of social services. At a workshop, Alfonso presented ESN's jointly produced report on integrated services with Mirella Minkman from Vilans, Centre of Expertise for Long term Care in the Netherlands.

For Quality! Project

In April 2016, the For Quality! Project on the quality of personal care and household services came to an end with the publication of a toolkit with practice examples from across Europe and recommendations for the European, national and local levels. This project, which had been running since 2014 and had ESN as a partner, saw the publication of 11 country profiles on policies and regulations of the sector, the professionalisation of the workforce and its working conditions.

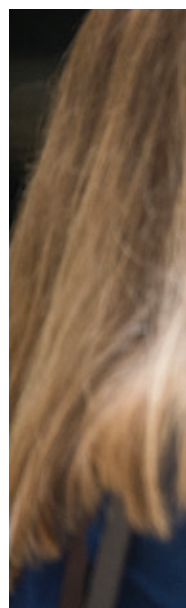
European Innovation Partnership on Active and Health Ageing (EIP-AHA)

The EIP-AHA brings together key stakeholders – local and regional authorities, services users, industry and research – to find ways to overcome barriers to innovation in health and social care, to promote healthy, active and independent lives, and to improve the sustainability and efficiency of European care systems. ESN is a member of the EIP-AHA's Action Group on Integrated Care where we showcase examples from our members as good practice.



“It’s important that as many countries as possible come together to share their experiences, as it’s during the sharing of these experiences that you become inspired and great ideas develop.”

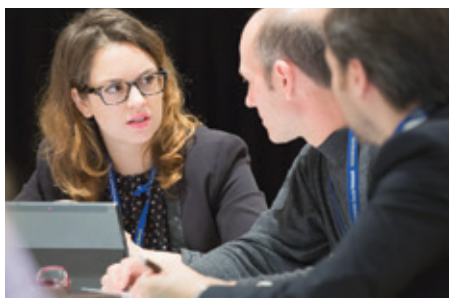
Jurgita Gajauskiene,
Vilnius city municipality,
Lithuania.





“Over the past 5 years, I have seen an increased focus on cross-sector collaboration and on new technologies in social services.”

Vibeke Abel, Hillerød Kommune, Denmark



Sharing reflections about public procurement in social services

On 27-28 October, Eurodiaconia invited ESN's Chief Executive John Halloran to an event in Berlin to share reflections on recent developments in public procurement in social services. In his contribution, John analysed successful drivers for cooperation between local authorities and provider organisations from a selection of good practices across Europe. He stated that public procurement must start with improving people's life chances and that it is not sufficiently person-centred and therefore is not as transformative as it could be.

Raising the profile of ICT-enabled social services

On 7-8 April, ESN Policy Director Alfonso Lara Montero spoke at the 4th IESI expert workshop on ICT enabled Social services in Seville, Spain. IESI (ICT Enabled Social Investment) is a project led by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre aimed at exploring the role of ICT in promoting social innovation, specifically in social services. ESN's Policy Director Alfonso Lara Montero, who is a member of the advisory board, reflected on how ICT-based tools can be effectively embedded into social services management and provision.

Contributing to the European Semester

ESN launched the Reference Group on the European Semester in 2014 to make social issues and the challenges faced by local public social services visible in the framework of the European Semester, the annual economic policy coordination process between the European Commission and EU Member States. In 2016, the Reference Group brought together directors and senior professionals working in public social services from 25 countries.

Involving local authorities and social services in EU policy-making

In November, we published our third annual report entitled: *Connecting Europe with local communities - Social services priorities for the European Semester 2017*. The publication presents the views of local public social services on the 2016 European Semester process and identifies social policy priorities for the 2017 cycle.

The report includes a review of the 2016 *European Commission's country reports* and *Country-specific Recommendations* (CSRs) conducted by the members of the Reference Group. The members of the Group were asked to complete a questionnaire and met in September to discuss the findings. The meeting was also an opportunity to discuss the Semester process and the future Social Rights Pillar with European Commission officials. The report is the result of a successful cooperation with the European Social Observatory (OSE), with whom ESN has been working on the European Semester for the past two years.

The report includes a cross-country analysis and 25 country profiles focussing on social services. Moreover, group members identified 25 recommendations (one per country) that the Commission should make to their national governments in 2017.

Key issues for local public social services

The report raises key questions around how the European Semester addresses the socio-economic challenges of the countries featured in the report. These included the impact of fiscal consolidation on public social policies and budgets, integrated social inclusion strategies, financing social services, homelessness and housing exclusion, children's services, community care, migrants' social inclusion and the use of EU funding in the field of social services.

A wider approach to social inclusion

While the Commission's analyses are thorough, it was felt that the CSRs are biased towards macroeconomic discipline, deficit reduction and social inclusion through employment. Therefore, the Group members required that further attention be paid to the persistent risk of increasing inequalities and polarisation within the population as a way to advance social inclusion. In this light, the CSRs should pay more attention to reconciling the priority of deficit reduction with an adequate level of social spending.

“The strength of the meeting was the strong presence of European Commission officials, which allowed for direct exchange and influence. These officials could then make an in-depth analysis of the responses from the 25 Member States present”

Josée Goris, PPS Social Integration, Belgium

Looking ahead

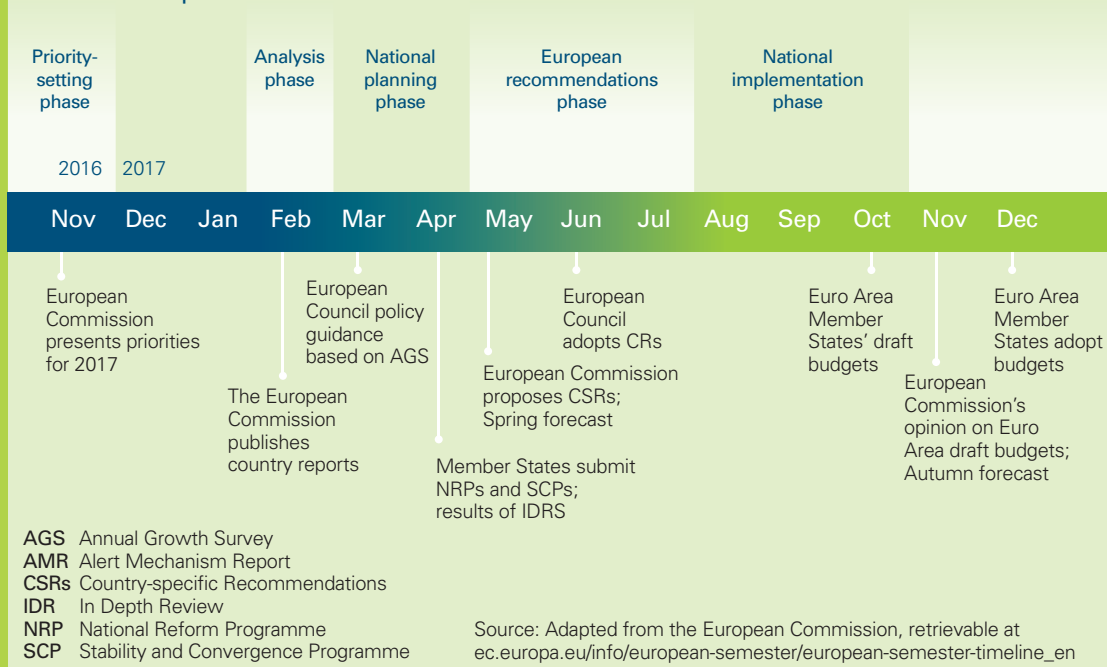
The publication of the report coincided with the *2017 European Commission's Annual Growth Survey (AGS)*, describing the priorities to be addressed in next year's European Semester process. In an initial assessment, ESN suggests the need to prioritise the fight in the rise of inequalities, because (as recognised by the European Commission in the AGS) high levels of inequality reduce the economy's output and the potential for sustainable growth, as poverty and social exclusion are still very high.

Next year will mark the fourth year of ESN's Reference Group. It will be the opportunity for ESN and our members to review the process and make suggestions for the years to come on how to better involve local authorities in the design and evaluation of macro-economic and social policies at EU level.



Download your copy of our 2016 European Semester report 'Connecting Europe to local communities': esn-eu.org/raw.php?page=files&id=2288

The 2017 European Semester Process





Network with Other Key Decision-Makers from Across Europe



Rich Amos
Gloucestershire
voices
UK

“I strongly feel that I have gained relevant knowledge on policies and practices related to service user involvement in Europe, especially for people with disabilities. It was enlightening to see the wide range of practices happening across the European landscape.”



Network

A Growing and More Diverse Network





New Members in 2016

- | | |
|----|---|
| 01 | University of Sussex |
| 02 | Consortium of Social Services – Area A5 |
| 03 | Municipality of Igoumenitsa |
| 04 | Public Centre for Social Welfare Kortrijk |
| 05 | City of Porto |
| 06 | Care Property Invest |
| 07 | Gloucestershire Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Partnership |
| 08 | General Direction of Social Assistance and Child Protection – Arad Municipality |
| 09 | Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities |
| 10 | Foundation for Social Welfare Services |
| 11 | Network of Directors Social Domain (NDSD) |
| 12 | MATIA Foundation |
| 13 | Polish Committee of Social Welfare |
| 14 | Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) |
| 15 | Municipality of Esbjerg |

📍 This symbol indicates existing members

Member Participation

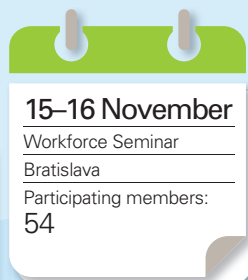
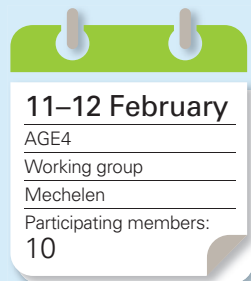
2016 Activities

2016 saw 14 new members joining us from all over Europe. ESN works with 128 member organisations in 34 countries worldwide from a number of different government levels including: national associations of directors of social services; national, regional and local departments of social services, research organisations, regulatory agencies and the third sector.

This year ESN has been supporting its members in their work at national level, in sharing knowledge and expertise through a peer learning programme, and through participation at seminars, working groups, workshops and membership visits.

ESN organises a peer-learning programme, which gives member organisations the opportunity to undertake visits to other countries to help to implement similar programmes in the their own countries. Three visits took place this year:

Participating members at ESN's 2016 events



1. Supported employment for people with intellectual disabilities: A visit was hosted by the Municipality of Stenungsund (Sweden) for the City of Riga in Latvia and Rupju Berns, a third sector-provider. The visitors learned how legislation supports the development of person-centred employment for people with intellectual disabilities.
2. Integration of health and social care: The Regional Government of Catalonia hosted a visit of the Association of Social Services Directors from Finland to present their regional health and social care integrated plan and how it is implemented in several municipalities. The main lessons learnt addressed shared information platforms, mutual training, and joint evaluation.
3. Technology application in older people's services: The Municipality of Östersund, (Sweden) hosted a visit for the Belgian Municipality of Mechelen to showcase various technology applications in older people's care. Östersund showed how the digital tools that they use can improve services, be these home visits via web cameras or care of people with dementia in wellness rooms.

ESN speaks at the conference of the Spanish General Council of Social Work

ESN's Policy Director Alfonso Lara Montero spoke at the seminar organised by ESN member, the General Council of Social Work, in Madrid on 24th May to address the importance of networking at international level as a way to advance social policy developments. Alfonso took this opportunity to discuss with representatives from the 19 regional colleges of social work in Spain their views on the principles put forward by the European Commission on its proposal for a Pillar of Social Rights and the recommendations addressed to Spain in the framework of the European Semester.

ESN speaks at the annual conference of ANDASS (the Association of French directors of social services)

On 28-30 September, ESN attended the annual conference of the French National Association of Directors of Social Care and Health at the local level (ANDASS) hosted by the City of Paris. ESN's CEO John Halloran provided a European perspective on discussions, emphasising the need to promote innovative solutions within services, work creatively and adopt user-centred approaches. John reiterated the need to work across traditional service and sector boundaries in order to make a real difference to people's lives.



Discussing integrated care reforms in Finland

On 18 November, ESN Policy Director – Alfonso Lara Montero – spoke at the annual meeting of the Finnish association of social services directors in Helsinki. Alfonso was asked to address the key findings of the report 'Integrated social services' that ESN launched in March 2016. The aim was to discuss practice examples from across Europe to establish a comparison with the situation in Finland, which is currently immersed in a structural health and social care reform. Discussions focused on the pace of the reforms, its top-down approach and the lack of an evidence-base for the scope of the measures that are being implemented.



Care Inspectorate, Scotland –
Helen Happer, Chief Inspector
for Strategic Level Scrutiny

Q Why did you join ESN?

A I was invited to attend the peer review of the project “Investing in Children’s Services, Improving Outcomes” in Barcelona and personally I was impressed with the connections made amongst people in the seminar. I was intrigued by the project and by the similarities and the differences between different countries.

Q Why do you think it is important to share knowledge in your field?

A Because there is nothing new under the sun, we can learn by listening to other people and contribute with some of our own learning.

Q Please tell us the added values of being an ESN member in just 3 words

A I can do it in 4 words: You are not alone. I think it is hugely valuable to be able to look around and learn from other people.



Public Centre for Social Welfare (PCSW) – Kortrijk, Belgium,
Philippe De Coene, President

Q Why did you join ESN?

A We contacted ESN to present a workshop at their annual conference in Lisbon. We weren’t members at the time but we were impressed with the conference; the learning, the networking and projects presented. We found it enriching. Afterwards we returned to Kortrijk and said to ourselves “We have to join this network”.

Q Why do you think it is important to share knowledge in your field?

A I want to answer this with an example. During ESN’s 2016 conference in The Hague, each morning we studied the list of workshops and split them among us. We could then capture the ideas presented and write a short report on key learnings for later discussion back in Kortrijk. This knowledge sharing helped us to inform our daily work.

Q Please tell us the added values of being an ESN member in just 3 words

A Getting in touch with ideas, policies and with people.

“ESN is a network of European actors which is useful because they bring accurate insights to the table that help my organisation to tackle the diverse issues facing public social services today.”

Päivi Lindberg,
National Institute for
Health and Welfare,
Finland.



**SUMAR, Spain – Anna Tarafa,
Assistant Manager and
Communications Officer**

Q Why did you join ESN?

A The request to join ESN came directly from the municipalities that we work for. The European Social Network is a source of knowledge for them. An opportunity to learn from the lessons of other European municipalities.

Q Why do you think it is important to share knowledge in your field?

A Mention a specific case: last November, SUMAR went to the working group on Ageing and Care. It was a meeting that gave us food for thought and we circulated what we had learnt to all the municipalities that we collaborate with.

Over the coming months, in Catalonia we will organise an event about innovation in social services. We are planning to use the contacts that, through ESN, we have made with other European organisations to showcase innovative practices from other countries.

Q Please tell us the added values of being an ESN member in just 3 words

A Knowledge, innovation and networking.



**Brighton and Hove City
Council, England – Pinaki
Ghoshal, Director of Families,
Children and Learning**

Q Why did you join ESN?

A Brighton used to be an ESN member. We decided to re-join because it is very important that we are linked with wider networks and that we have the opportunity to learn from others to improve what we do within the city.

Also, being part of ESN is instrumental to provide opportunity for social workers to network at a wider level.

Q Why do you think it is relevant to share knowledge in your field?

A Often we do something similar to other social services in other European countries but we reach the same result through different routes that are sometimes not the most efficient way to organise yourself. It's not always the best idea to "reinvent the wheel", sometimes you need to be aware that somebody else has made a perfectly good wheel and you need to ask yourself how it can be tweaked and improved.

Q Please tell us the added values of being an ESN member in just 3 words

A Learning, sharing, improving.

Learning: it's arrogant to think you know all the answers.

Sharing: what we do in our field is interesting and we have the responsibility to share that.

Improving: there is a big national agenda in terms of improving quality for children and social care and we need to do the very best we can.

Network

The Future is Local!

The Hague 2016

24th European Social Services Conference

Empowering communities, combatting poverty, improving lives

Organised in cooperation with the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the 24th European Social Services Conference (ESSC) took place in The Hague on 20-22 June 2016. The conference explored how public services could collaborate more effectively with local communities and their citizens in combatting poverty and social exclusion.

Welcoming over 320 delegates from 36 countries in Europe and beyond, ESN's flagship annual event was a unique opportunity to exchange knowledge and skills, while also providing a space for senior professionals working in the social sector to build new connections and networks.

Over the course of four plenary sessions, twenty-two workshops and three new 'Shape the Debate' panel discussions, delegates discussed the decentralisation of social service delivery, the increasing need to involve citizens in service planning and the future of local social services.

"We are aiming to build a broad, strong common ground with social networks in every neighbourhood... built around the idea of a 'community of practice'".

Ahmed Aboutaleb,
Mayor of Rotterdam,
The Netherlands



"Integration through devolution is what drives local innovation... our goal is user-centred innovation that engages citizens and enables communities to flourish."

Janet Menard, Deputy
Minister of Community
and Social Services,
Ontario, Canada





Decentralisation at a crossroads

With almost half of EU countries engaged in territorial reform in recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the role that communities can play in delivering solutions to social challenges.

Frédéric Vallier, Secretary General of the Council for European Municipalities and Regions, set the scene by outlining the current challenges and opportunities for local government across Europe.

Decentralisation is also synonymous with local government budget cuts impacting on community-based services, leading municipalities to focus exclusively on their statutory duties rather than prevention and community building.

René Paas, former Chair of the Association of Employment and Social Services Directors in The Netherlands (Divosa), argued that "thinking in silos, excessive bureaucracy and attempts to prevent municipalities being different are decisive factors in making decentralisation fail".

Empowering communities, involving users

To achieve better outcomes, co-production and the active involvement of users and citizens emerged as a recurring theme. As emphasised by Chris Sigaloff from the 'think and do tank' Kennisland, "more than creating new structures, we need to create new ways of communicating and interacting".

In an inspiring speech, Ahmed Aboutaleb, Rotterdam's mayor, highlighted that communities need a strong government that nurtures people's talent and empowers individuals to be active in shaping their local communities.

An expansive workshop programme featuring a range of European organisations – including ESN Members such as the Regional Government of Catalonia, Social Work Scotland and the Janusz Korczak University in Warsaw – illustrated these key messages with compelling examples of service user-led initiatives, integrated approaches to service provision and the role of technology in empowering citizens.



Network The Future is Local! The Hague 2016

24th European Social Services Conference

Sascha Haselmayer from Citymart in New York presented new forms of public procurement that empowered communities while improving outcomes. For example, the 'Open Challenge' in Barcelona launched by the City Council received 119 bids from 55,000 citizens and entrepreneurs, created 12 new businesses and resulted in 30% lower costs and higher quality than traditional methods.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country affected by corruption and unemployment, social entrepreneur Zoran Puljic from the Mozaik Foundation explained how he worked hand in hand with municipalities and local youth to develop youth-led community projects.

Rich Amos, service user and self-advocate from Gloucestershire (England), reinforced this message by requesting that "we build confidence in people to make sure that they are able to contribute to society".

Shaping the future of local social services

With an eye on the ESSC 2017, which will explore innovation at the local level, the ESSC 2016 also highlighted the importance of ICT and technology in facilitating a community-based approach in social services. Industry partners Edenred, IBM Watson Health, SAP's Institute for Digital Government and Esri showcased the latest trends in digital innovation for social welfare.



"We should build the structures so that everyone can take the initiative and collaborate to solve problems."

Sascha Haselmayer,
CEO and Founder
of Citymart





The final round table brought together representatives from the European Commission, National and Regional Governments, National Associations of Social Services Directors as well as third sector and user representatives, who discussed the future of local social services. Some of the key messages included:

1. Decentralisation is too often synonymous with local government budget cuts, which are pushing social workers to focus solely on their statutory duties of protection. Therefore, there is a need to rebalance duties and take care of community work.
2. At EU level, the future Pillar of Social Rights should follow a life-cycle approach and account for social adequate standards in terms of income and social services.
3. At the local level, there is a need to review quality indicators for social services, including those accounting for the participation of users and citizens as a whole.



“The conference is an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and knowledge which in turn helps us to be innovative in our own services and in our daily practices.”

Carlos Santos Guerrero,
Head of services
for coordinating
community social
services, Autonomous
Community of Galicia,
Spain

Watch our latest video
‘Celebrating 25 years of
knowledge sharing’ here:
esn-eu.org/videos/55/index.html



Network Looking Forward Towards 2017

2017 promises to be an action-packed and eventful year for ESN. We have a number of projects planned, and we will work with our members to ensure knowledge transfer, sharing of good practices and strengthening innovation in the delivery of social services.

ESN's programme for 2017 focuses on the EC political priorities of social welfare reform and the modernisation of social protection, addresses key challenges for public social services today such as the refugee crisis and takes stock of the activities undertaken within our 4 year strategy 2014-2017 in order to come up with future priorities for 2018-2020.

As a follow up to the publication of the study 'Investing in Children's Services, Improving Outcomes', ESN will be working with its members to support the organisation of national events to discuss the report's findings and address challenges in the implementation of the EC Recommendation 'Investing in children'.

Taking into account the difficulties faced by social services in working with an increasing number of asylum-seeking refugee children and the lack of policies when they turn 18, ESN will be exploring these issues more in depth in a seminar.

ESN will publish two toolkits advising senior practitioners in local social services on integrated care and independent living in the fields of disability and older people's services.

In line with a fairer and more social economic union, members of the ESN's Reference Group on the European Semester will continue to analyse their national government's reform programmes and EC's country specific recommendations and provide input for ESN's annual report.

Aligned with the modernisation of social welfare and social services, ESN will organise a series of meetings on the future of social welfare. One of these meetings will take the form of a Members' Forum, where all ESN members will have the opportunity to come up with key priorities for the 2018-2020 strategy.

How We Work Bringing Skills and Knowledge from Across Europe



Harri Jokiranta, Ph.D.
Project manager
social welfare and
health care reform at
South Ostrobothnia
Finland

“I am charged with the reform of health and social services in one of 18 counties in Finland, I have found that ESN is key to my work. As a network, it successfully creates a European-level understanding of social services development. ESN’s activities all support this and serve to reflect future trends and allow for knowledge sharing between colleagues and experts alike.”



How We Work

Governance and Leadership

ESN Board

The Board of ESN is composed of 18 member organisations from 30 countries, mainly national professional associations of directors of social services and regional government director representatives. It plays a key role in ESN's mission and development.

Three Board meetings took place in 2016; the first in Bruges at the beginning of March at which members discussed, amongst other issues, key findings of ESN survey on the Refugee crisis in Europe, the second meeting took place prior to the Annual General Meeting at the 24th European Social Services Conference in Hague in June and the third in Brighton in October where members discussed Brexit and ESN governance.

This year, the Board welcomed the following new member representatives: Mr Antonio Mazzarotto, Director for *Families and Children* from the Department for Regional Health and Social Policy of the Lazio Region, Italy; Jane Devine, Business Manager from Social Work Scotland, which brings together social work professionals in Scotland and Graham Owen, Director of Social Services, Municipality of Trosa, Sweden and a Board member of the Swedish Directors Association (FSS).

Philip Cotterill has stepped down from the Board. Philip joined as Director for Kirklees in Yorkshire before retiring several years ago. He had a special interest in Romania and in developing social services for the City of Arad. We thank him for his commitment to the Board of ESN after many years.

“I find it interesting to participate in the ESN network, because it gives me the opportunity to gain knowledge about what is currently going on in the fields of health and social care in Europe. It also gives me the chance to influence the EU's views on how we develop social and health policies”.

Kate Bøgh, Favrskov, Kommune and the Association of Social Directors in Denmark (FSD), Denmark



Business Committee

The Board delegates regular operational decision-making responsibility to the Business Committee (to include financial matters; strategy; conference; risk review; other operational business matters).

The Committee members are Christian Fillet, Director of Social Services, City of Bruges (OCMw) who is Chair of ESN; Honorary Treasurer - Harri Jokiranta, Project Manager at City of Seinäjoki in Finland; Carlos Santos Guerrero, Head of Services for Coordinating Community Social Services; Autonomous Community of Galicia, Unnur V. Ingólfssdóttir, President of the Association of Social Directors in Iceland and John Halloran, ESN Chief Executive and Company Secretary.

Annual Members Meeting The Hague

The Annual Members Meeting (AMM) took place at the beginning of The Hague conference and was attended over 100 members. With the opening welcome from the Chair, Christian Fillet, the Business Committee and CEO provided an updated summary of the accounts and membership development which comprised 11 new member organisations from UK, Italy, Belgium, Greece, Portugal and Romania.

The policy officers together with participating members described the working groups, workshops and seminars they had been involved in throughout the previous year and highlighted recent publications and communications and media activity. Finally, the programme for the coming 6 months was presented, notably the annual seminar in Bratislava on the Future of the Social Care Workforce, and members invited to contribute to its preparation and development.

Funding

ESN signed a four-year framework agreement for 2014-2017 with the European Commission under the EaSI programme (2014-2020) and receives a grant for its annual work programme. The annual European Social Services Conference organised by ESN is a separate self-funded activity.

ESN accounts are annually audited, reviewed by the ESN Board and submitted to the European Commission (with regards to the annual work programme), and to Companies House and the Charity Commission in the UK.

The annual accounts are available online at Companies House, which incorporates limited companies and registers and makes public all legally required information, and the Charity Commission in the UK.

How We Work

Meet the Team in Brighton



The ESN Secretariat

ESN has an international and multi-skilled team from all across Europe and speaks over 11 languages, led by John Halloran, Chief Executive. Our Secretariat is based in Brighton, a city with a large diverse European population and a vibrant cultural and music scene.

Policy

The policy team is led by Alfonso Lara Montero, ESN Policy Director, who is responsible for managing the European Commission (EC) programme and relations with the EC. The policy team works on a number of themes. Alfonso leads children and families, evidence-based practice and EU policy. Dorothea Baltruks works on ageing and care, active inclusion and employment; Kim Nikolaj Japing, on mental

health and young people; Marianne Doyen on disability and European Structural and Investment Funds. Throughout the year, we have welcomed young graduates joining our policy and communications internship programme.

Communications

Susan Clandillon, Senior Communications Officer, and Anita Alfonsi, Communications and Data Officer promote our work through different media and communication channels. They look after our website, publications, videos, podcasts and newsletters. This year the communications team has also welcomed young graduates on a temporary basis to assist with data development and dissemination of key messages.

Membership and Administration

Andreas Juul Standley-Johansen, Operations and Development Manager, is in charge of membership, financial reporting, and partnership development. He also takes care of the organisation of all the activities funded under the EC programme. Hana Bellova, Executive and Business Support, deals with financial administration, governance, human resources and supports the Chief Executive.

European Social Services Conference

Our annual conference is organised by David Scurr, Conference Manager, and Aurelia Mandato, Conference Organiser.

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