European Semester Reference Group
2015 Meeting

Place: Representation of the Lazio Region in Brussels
Rond-Point Schuman 14 Schumanplein
1040 Brussels
Date: Monday 21st September 2015
Time: 09.00 - 16.30
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ESN’s Reference Group on the European Semester

As part of our 4-year strategy 2014-2017, the European Social Network (ESN) launched a Reference Group (hereafter “the Group”) in the field of EU social policy in 2014.

The aim of this Reference Group is to make social issues and the challenges faced by social services visible in the framework of the European Semester’s cycle of economic and social policy coordination that takes place among Member States. Public social services at local level have a major responsibility in implementing services and policies aiming at social inclusion of all groups, especially the most vulnerable. They are key in helping to modernise social protection systems and supporting the development of adequate social protection schemes, in their communities and throughout Europe. This was outlined in the agenda for “Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change" and taken up by the Annual Growth Survey 2015².

ESN’s Reference Group on the European Semester explores how social services issues, for instance, on children, disability, mental health and ageing and care, are addressed at national and European levels, and develop specific recommendations to feed into the European Semester.

The annual meeting

In 2015, social services directors from 23 EU member states will gather to exchange views and develop key messages in the framework of the 2015 European Semester process³. Prior to this meeting, a cross-comparative analysis has been circulated to all participants and will serve as a basis for discussions. This analysis has been drafted on the basis of members’ responses to ESN questionnaires that asked members to analyse relevant sections of three key EU and national documents: the European Commission (EC)’s country reports, the government’s National Reform Programmes (NRPs) and the EC’s Country-specific Recommendations (CSRs).

Background

What is the European Semester?

The EC’s Strategy Europe 2020 is underpinned by five targets, out of which the most relevant for social services include: reducing early school leaving below 10%, 75% of those aged 20-64 should be in employment and lifting 20 million out of poverty and social exclusion. The European Semester involves the EC undertaking a detailed analysis of EU Member States' programmes of economic and social reforms and providing them with recommendations for the next 12 months.

² Annual Growth Survey 2015 COM(2014) 902 final
³ ESN’s report from last year on Connecting Europe to local communities can be downloaded here.
The key elements of the European Semester which relate to the delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy are as follows:

1. The Annual Growth Survey is published in November;
2. Member States produce their own National Reform Programmes outlining their efforts to help achieve the targets of Europe 2020 by March;
3. The European Commission issues Country-specific Recommendations in April/May;
4. These Recommendations are adopted by the European Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in June.

**How important is this process for public social services?**

The European Semester follows the economic and social policy reforms that national governments are undertaking, highlighting any gaps in policy-making for each member state. However, ESN has been analysing them over the past years and realised that the social dimension has been weak in comparison to the economic dimension. Therefore, the input from a professional and local angles of those working in the social services field is of vital importance in order to inform national and European policy makers about key social challenges in Europe.

ESN’s Reference Group provides directors of public social services with the opportunity of a mutual learning and exchange platform, as well as a direct link with the EC, so that social services directors and senior professionals can describe their views from the perspective of local public social services as to what the Commission should recommend national governments.

**Activities of the Reference Group**

The members of the Reference Group undertake an analysis of three key EU and national policy documents (CSRs, NRPs, and since 2015, the EC’s country reports). They meet once a year, in September. A report is then produced, feeding into the European Semester policy process.

**Requirements**

**Members of ESN’s Reference Group on the European Semester should be able to:**

- Read the three documents relevant for their own country;
- Assess the adequacy and quality of the three documents by filling out a template (provided by ESN);
- Attend the annual meeting;
- Come to the meeting well-informed and prepared, having worked in advance on the analysis of the country reports, CSRs and NRPs for their country;
- Publicise the work of the Group within their organisation and nationally – with the support of the ESN lead contact person in their organisation and their own organisation’s communications structure;
• Be able to communicate comfortably in English, i.e. being able to understand policy documents and draft short written analyses;

• Commit approximately 4 working days per year (two working days for reviewing and analysing the CSRs and NRPs, one working day for the meeting and one working day for providing written input after the meeting).

Benefits

• Have the views and expertise of directors and senior professionals in public social services heard by policy makers at national and European levels;

• Meet and work closely with other directors and senior professionals in public social services around Europe in order to have their expertise integrated into EU policies;

• Help shape ESN’s position on key European policies.
**Agenda**

**Monday 21 September**

09:00-9:15 **Introduction**

*John Halloran, Chief Executive, European Social Network*

- Welcome and presentation of the Group’s aims
- Tour de table

09:15-10:00 **Social public services and the European Semester: a cross-country analysis**

*Alfonso Lara Montero, Policy Director at the European Social Network (ESN)*  
*Bart Vanhercke, Director of the European Social Observatory (OSE)*  

Presentation of the outcomes and main messages drawn from the analysis of 23 questionnaires submitted by ESN members

10:00-11:15 **The European Semester cycle**

*Jeroen Jutte, Head of Unit “European Employment Strategy and Governance”, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission*

Followed by a discussion with the Group members

11:15-11:45 **Coffee break**

11:45-13:15 **Peer-review exercise**

- Social inclusion: impact of the crisis and the reform of public social services provision (France/Spain)  
  *Presented by Emmanuel Gagneux, French Association of Social Directors*  
  *Reviewed by Mercedes García Sáez, Director of the Drug Addiction and Social Inclusion Department, Ministry of Equality and Social Policies of Andalusia*

- Child and family poverty within a wider strategy to reduce poverty (Belgium/Portugal)  
  *Presented by José Goris, Head of the Anti-Poverty Policy Unit, PPS Social Integration in Belgium*  
  *Reviewed by Fernanda Rodrigues, President of the Portuguese Association of Social Services Professionals*

- Young people: how can education, employment and social services ensure their transition into adulthood and participation in society (Finland/England)  
  *Presented by Jukka Lindberg, Purchasing Manager at the Finnish Association of Social Services Directors*
Reviewed by John Powell, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services in England

- People with disabilities and older people: key issues in long-term care (Poland/Czech Republic)

Presented by Sergo Kuruliszwilli, Director of the Polish Institute for the Development of Social Services

Reviewed by Pavel Čáslava, Chairman of the Ethics Committee at the Czech Association of Social Care Providers

13:15-14:15 Networking lunch

14:15-15:15 Group discussions

Members will work with peers in groups to address the following issues:

- How can public social services cope with decreasing resources whilst fulfilling users’ needs?

This question will be discussed in light of the themes covered in the peer reviews (see above)

- What are the messages that you would like the EC to address in the 2015 Annual Growth Survey? Why?

- What would be your recommendation(s) for the European Semester process?

- Think of a recommendation that your country should be given by the EC for next year in the field of social services and why.

15:15-16:00 Reporting back and 2016 Recommendations

16:00-16:15 Next steps & Closing
Cross-country analysis

Methodology

In the context of a renewed emphasis on a coordinated approach between economic and social policies at European level, the European Social Network (ESN) launched a call to gather the input of public social services organisations in the European Semester process. A total of 24 organisations working on public social services at local, regional and national levels responded to this call. The countries covered by this exercise include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. ESN drafted a questionnaire that was submitted to each individual organisation and completed during the summer. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The aim of section one was to address the adequacy of the European Semester and local public social services’ involvement. To do so, we identified 7 key themes and requested the members of the Group to assess how comprehensively these had been addressed by their governments in the NRPs and in the CSRs made by the EC to these countries. The themes selected were:

1. Governance: crisis and reform impact in social service provision
2. Children: children’s services and childcare; child poverty and social inclusion
3. Young People: early school leaving; (un)employment
4. Older People: long-term care and service provision
5. People with disabilities and people with mental health problems: employment; development of community care services
6. Employment: low-skilled, long-term unemployed
7. Other vulnerable groups: migrants, Roma, homeless people.

Section two was also divided in two sub-sections – the first one on the CSRs and the second, on the NRPs. The questions aimed to provide a general view as to whether these two documents captured the social situation in the different countries and the role of social services in helping the most vulnerable as well as the challenges they face (e.g. in issues around budgeting, contracting and delivery).

The questionnaires were analysed in order to assess firstly the adequacy of the European Semester process in addressing the main socio-economic challenges faced by public social services and their involvement in drafting and implementing the NRPs and CSRs. The second part of the analysis provides a comparison as to how the themes above were assessed and other key issues that may have come up in the answers to the questionnaires.

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This draft cross-country analysis is based on the contributions received from the members of the Reference Group and has been jointly drafted by the European Social Observatory (Bart Vanhercke, Sebastiano Sabato) and the European Social Network.

For the complete list of members and country abbreviations, see list of participants.
**Part 1: Adequacy of the CSRs and the NRPs in addressing the main socio-economic challenges and involvement of local public social services**

Looking at the adequacy of the CSRs in addressing the main socio-economic challenges in the countries featured in this analysis, the main conclusion is that there is a wide variation between Member States. In ten cases, members of the Group gave a positive appreciation of the recommendations received by their countries (BG, HR, CZ, EE, IT, LV, LT, RO, SI, SE), while in eleven countries members of the Group felt that the CSRs did not adequately address the main socio-economic challenges that they currently face (BE, DK, FI, FR, HU, IE, NL, PL, PT, ES, UK). One of the key reasons for this negative appraisal is that the CSRs failed to strike a balance between economic and social objectives: economic objectives and fiscal consolidation targets were felt to be the priority, while insufficient attention was devoted to social priorities. In some cases, members expressed their surprise about the absence of a CSR in the area of poverty and social exclusion, especially where this was seen as a priority challenge for the countries concerned.

Members’ answers were rather clear-cut when addressing the question of whether the role of local public social services was sufficiently acknowledged in the draft CSRs. In eleven countries, it was highlighted that this was not the case (HU, IE, IT, LV, NL, PT, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK). A more positive appreciation was found in four cases (BG, HR, EE, FR). This negative assessment may come from the fact that specific issues concerning local public social services are not addressed by the CSRs, while in fewer cases members underlined a more general lack of attention towards these services and an underestimation of their importance.

In the 2015 cycle, the EC introduced some key changes in the procedures of the European Semester, including ‘fewer and more targeted’ CSRs. Members were asked to provide their opinion on this new approach, and to assess the possible consequences for local public social services. In a number of cases, respondents assessed this approach as ‘negative’ or ‘rather negative’ (DK, FI, DE, IE, IT, NL, PL, PT, UK). These members generally claimed that the reduction in the number of CSRs entailed — or was likely to entail — a decrease in the attention devoted to social policies or the role of local public social services. Four members seemed to be ‘positive’ or ‘rather positive’ towards the reduction in the number of CSRs (BG, CZ, HR, LV), while four respondents said that they did not expect any significant change.

The elaboration of the NRPs is — at least in formal terms — one of the key stages of the European Semester at national level. As it was the case for the CSRs, members of the Group were asked to assess to what extent the NRPs addressed adequately the main social-economic challenges faced by their countries, and whether the role of local public social services was adequately acknowledged in these documents. Nine respondents found that the NRPs were effective in addressing the main socio-economic challenges (BG, CZ, DK, EE, IT, LV, RO, SI, SE), and precisely as many answered negatively (BE, FI, FR, HU, IE, NL, PL, SK, ES). Among the main limitations of the NRPs, insufficient attention was given to specific social issues or to social policy in general, but also inadequate responses to

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6 The reference is to 2015 CSRs proposed by the European Commission (i.e. before they are amended by the Member States and adopted by the Council of the EU).
7 Eight members did not provide any answer to this question, or their answer was not entirely clear.
8 In four cases, members did not provide their opinions on this topic.
9 In five cases, no answer or unclear answers were provided.
social challenges and the lack of a strategic long-term vision were underlined. When it comes to local public social services, eight members of the Group claimed that their role was not adequately acknowledged (CZ, FI, HU, LV, PT, SK, SI, ES), while five gave a more positive appreciation (HR, FR, IE, NL, PL)\(^{10}\).

One of the objectives of the questionnaire was to understand to what extent respondents had been involved in the key activities of the European Semester at national level, notably the implementation of the CSRs and the elaboration of the NRPs. Most respondents confirmed that they were aware of the formal structure responsible for the implementation of the CSRs: this was the case for eleven of them (BE, BG, CZ, DE, FI, IT, PL, SK, SI, SE, UK). In four cases, however, respondents gave a negative answer (EE, FR, IE, PT)\(^{11}\).

Similar trends emerged in regards to the NRPs. At least 15 members of the Group were able to identify the national body responsible for drafting the NRPs in their countries (BE, BG, HR, CZ, DK, EE, DE, IE, IT, LV, LT, PL, SK, SI, SE), while five respondents were not aware of such a structure (FI, FR, PT, ES, UK). However, only four respondents had actually been involved in the elaboration of the NRPs (BG, HR, CZ, LT), while seven stated that they had not been involved at all (FI, FR, IE, IT, PT, SK, ES)\(^{12}\). It seems therefore safe to conclude that the involvement of local public social services in the elaboration of key European Semester documents such as the NRPs in 2014-2015 was rather limited.

**Part 2. Cross-country comparison of key themes**

1. **Fiscal consolidation and the impact on public social policy**

In the context of the financial and economic crisis, fiscal consolidation measures have been implemented in most Member States. In many cases, budgetary cuts have entailed a reduction of local government budgets and impacted on social policy funding, design and implementation. In this context, concerns were raised about the consequences of fiscal consolidation in terms of effectiveness of national social protection systems and the quality of social services provision.

The Spanish and the Italian ESN members recognised the importance of the objectives of macroeconomic stability and budgetary discipline. However, they also underlined the need to better take into account the role played by regions in providing social services when implementing budgetary saving plans. For example, the spending review implemented by the Italian government is imposing heavy cuts, which risk having a detrimental impact on social services provision.

In Finland, the government has put forward an ambitious fiscal consolidation plan, which includes savings in education, freezing social benefits and allowances, the reduction of state grants for services, cuts in subsidies to the municipalities, and the limitation of resources devoted to welfare services. The Portuguese Association of Social Services Professionals stressed that, in the last few years, there had been a severe erosion of public functions, with

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\(^{10}\) In no less than ten cases, no answer was given to this question by members, or the answer provided by the respondents was unclear.

\(^{11}\) Eight members did not reply to this question.

\(^{12}\) In twelve cases, no answer or unclear answers were given to this question.
a number of public services being discontinued or reduced, and the tendency of the Portuguese authorities to rely on emergency measures, rather than on long-term strategies to address social problems.

The Hungarian Association of Social Professions referred to the fact that education was among the sectors most severely hit by fiscal consolidation measures in Hungary, while in Ireland concerns were raised about the fact that cost-containment considerations seemed to be the main levers behind the ongoing reform of the healthcare system, a circumstance which might lead to problems in terms of quality and effectiveness of healthcare services.

2. Distribution of competences in social policy and coordination between levels of government

A number of members referred to an unclear and sometimes overlapping or imbalanced distribution of competences and lack of coordination between the relevant levels of government as key issues impacting on the effectiveness of social policy and the quality of social services provision (BE, FR, IT, LT, PL, SI, PT, RO, ES). Reforms have either been implemented or are on-going in a number of countries (BE, CZ, FI, FR, PT), and the assessment of these reforms varied significantly. For instance, as a consequence of the Sixth State reform in Belgium, a number of competences have been shifted to the regions. Concerns were raised about difficulties in implementing these new competences and coordinating actions of the various government levels in employment and social policy.

The ongoing decentralisation process in France can be seen as rather confusing. Competences for different aspects of the same policy are shared between central and local governments in a way that makes it difficult to coordinate implementation. As a consequence, defining a clear set of principles concerning the allocation of competences between central and local governments (and coherently transferring competences) was identified as a priority.

A debate involving the central state and local authorities over their respective responsibilities in promoting social inclusion is currently taking place in Slovenia. The lack of coordination and partnership between the institutional actors involved in social and employment policies was identified as a serious problem in Lithuania and Poland. In Portugal, in a context characterised by a dramatic reduction in public service provision, NGOs have been given a much greater role in service provision, hence the need to monitor quality.

Particular concern was often expressed regarding the issue of responsibilities for funding social services (CZ, FI, PT, RO, SI, ES). According to ESN members, in both the Czech Republic and Finland, recent reforms have not adequately addressed the issue of social services’ financing. In the Czech Republic, the amendment to the Act on Social Services passed in 2014 granted more responsibilities to the regions when it comes to funding social services. However, according to the Czech ESN member, only limited progress has been made when it comes to improving the transparency of funding and reducing disparities between the regions, which continue to adopt different criteria when it comes to financing social services.

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13 Examples include primary and secondary schools, residential services for older people, unemployment benefits and labour market policies, social integration and professional training and disability policies.
According to the Finnish member, the ongoing reform of social and healthcare services does not adequately address their financing. Both in Romania and Slovenia shortcomings concerning state transfers to local communities have been flagged. In Slovenia, also as a consequence of a sometimes unclear distribution of competences between the various levels of government, local communities are experiencing difficulties in securing financing or co-financing of social programmes.

In a number of cases, members stressed the existence of remarkable territorial disparities in social services provision and quality (CZ, IT, ES). In particular, the Italian member stressed the need to enhance coordination amongst institutional actors in order to ensure a basic level of services in all Italian regions and to build a national database on the available services.

3. Developing comprehensive and integrated active inclusion strategies

A number of members stressed the need to adopt a broader view on social inclusion, going beyond an exclusive focus on labour market integration (DK, DE, IE). The importance of measures aiming at labour market integration was widely acknowledged. However, an exclusive focus on that objective cannot be effective, especially when it comes to the most vulnerable or the ones furthest from the labour market, who are generally in need of a complex set of interventions, beyond employability. As a consequence, it is necessary to elaborate and implement comprehensive and integrated active inclusion strategies, which take into account the three pillars of the 2008 Recommendation on active inclusion.

The Danish member, from the national Association of Social Directors, invited policy-makers to elaborate on the concept of ‘social sustainability’, meaning that social policies should aim at improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable, beyond mere employment. It was recognised that such a broader approach to social inclusion, which to some extent featured in Denmark’s NRP but not in the EC’s recommendations, may help in promoting the inclusion of the most vulnerable for whom employment and education are not the only challenges (e.g. people dealing with addictions, people involved with the justice system). It was also stressed (IE) that people’s vulnerability often concerned a number of other dimensions in life. Consequently, measures should encourage participation in other social and community activities (such as education and sport).

A number of shortcomings in employment policies were stressed by several members (BE, BG, HU, FR, SK, ES). First, the inadequacy of supply-side measures alone was highlighted in Hungary, Slovakia and Spain: more emphasis should be put on demand-side initiatives and on the sustainability and quality of jobs. Second, it is necessary to assess the effectiveness of some measures such as public work schemes in Hungary and subsidised jobs in the non-market sector in France. Third, several members expressed their concern as to the tendency to resort to ‘negative’ labour market activation incentives such as the reduction of social benefits or the tightening of eligibility criteria to access them, as it has been the case in Belgium and Hungary.

There has been substantial progress concerning the coverage and effectiveness of active labour market policies (ALMPs), especially policies targeted at young people, in Bulgaria. However, social assistance and unemployment schemes are still ineffective when it comes to supporting the inclusion of people furthest from the labour market. In Spain, the
programme for activation of the long-term unemployed has significant time constraints (non-renewable period of 6 months) and lacks accompanying measures to tackle the complex situations in which the long-term unemployed, people in poverty or at risk of social exclusion usually find themselves.

4. Availability of childcare services

The importance of childcare to promote children’s development, prevent the inheritance of social disadvantage, and facilitate parents' access to the labour market was widely acknowledged by members. While mixed progress has been reported when it comes to the availability and quality of childcare facilities, a number of experts pointed out difficulties in ensuring access to these services for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (CZ, HU, PL, ES). In some cases, this is due to insufficient financial resources, inadequate professionals’ training, or a lack of benefits and services explicitly targeted at the specific needs of such children.

Despite progress in the provision of childcare facilities and services in the Czech Republic, concerns were raised regarding difficulties in ensuring access for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g. Roma). The availability of childcare services and preschool education is still limited in Poland, but progress has been made over the last years. However, policy measures are not fully adequate or accessible for families with special needs – low income families, large families, those experiencing multidimensional problems – in need of additional support. The lack of measures to ensure equal opportunities for children from families at risk of poverty or social exclusion was underlined as a key issue in Spain. Along these lines, a comprehensive investment plan in early childhood education and care was deemed as necessary.

5. Long-term care and de-institutionalisation

In long-term care, a common trend towards de-institutionalisation was reported. The need to shift from residential care to home and community-based care was highlighted by almost all members. In some cases, progress is very limited or slow (CZ, EE, LV, LT, RO, SI). The inadequacy of financial resources devoted to home care (BE, LT, SI) was one of the main difficulties, while in other cases difficulties in coordinating the actions of the various services involved were said to limit the provision of long-term care services (LT, SI). Slow progress was stressed by the Estonian, Lithuanian and Slovenian members.

In Slovenia, a comprehensive reform of the long-term care system is under discussion. In Estonia, care provision at home and in day centres appears underdeveloped and it suffers from insufficient regulation. Similarly, in Lithuania formal non-residential care services for the elderly are underdeveloped, with family members, mostly women, taking up care responsibilities. However, this topic is not considered a priority in the NRP for 2015. When it comes to children in need, the Lithuanian member noted that the implementation of the action plan aiming at facilitating the transition from institutional to community care\textsuperscript{14} has been encountering severe challenges, mostly due to the lack of financial resources.

\textsuperscript{14} The ‘Action Plan for the Transition from Institutional Care to the provision of Services in Families and the Community for the Disabled and Children Deprived of Parental Care 2014-2020’ adopted in 2014.
In Belgium, budget cuts and stricter access conditions to long term care residential services have been implemented: though this represents a shift from institutional care to home care, it has been done without providing adequate financial resources. Finally, progress in the field has staggered in the Czech Republic, where initiatives in the area of long-term care undertaken in the past have been discontinued.

Nonetheless, positive developments were reported in Scotland and in Bulgaria. In Scotland, the Public Bodies Act 2014 — which integrates health and social care — will take full effect in 2016, possibly leading to the further development of integrated community based services. Since 2015, the European Social Fund (ESF) has been supporting the implementation of innovative integrated home services for people with disabilities in Bulgaria, especially targeted at children with disabilities and older people.

6. Homelessness and housing exclusion

A number of members referred to homelessness and housing exclusion as an increasingly burning problem in their countries (FR, IE, SE, UK). Problems related to housing are not limited to the most vulnerable groups insofar as they increasingly concern people from middle classes, due to high prices and a shortage of housing in some countries. The high level of home prices in France is a source of inequality as well as an obstacle to competitiveness: according to the French Association of Directors of Social Services, it will be necessary to reinforce the supply-side policy initiated by the government.

The homelessness situation has reached a crisis point in Ireland, with numerous families said to being now living night-to-night in hotels and cars. In the United Kingdom, there is a significant pressure on local authorities, particularly in London, to provide appropriate accommodation in the numbers required to meet demand: a reform of the sector has been planned, but it appears controversial and its adoption does not appear certain.

7. The role of EU funds

A number of members highlighted the role played by the European Structural and Investment Funds — in particular, the European Social Fund (ESF) — in financing social policy programmes in their countries (BG, EE, HU, IT, LV, PL, RO). Besides ALMPs, examples of EU-funded initiatives have been pointed out in domains such as the integration of people with disabilities and mental health problems (BG and EE), early childhood development and childcare (EE, HU), education (HU), Roma integration (BG, HU), older people’s services (BG, RO), social work training (LV).

The importance of EU funds in financing these policies has been stressed in particular in Bulgaria, Estonia and Italy. For instance, in the Lazio Region in Italy, in a context characterised by significant budget cuts in social services, the ESF-linked budget will represent a substantial part of the social policy funding. In Bulgaria, ALMPs and measures devoted to vulnerable groups such as the low-skilled, older workers, people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed and Roma are heavily dependent on resources provided by the ESF.
While the overall assessment of EU-funded projects is often positive, some shortcomings have emerged, especially related to their sustainability in the long-term. In some cases, they are small-size experimental projects which are not scaled up, and rarely lead to systemic change.

8. Evidence-based policy-making

A number of members stressed the insufficient attention paid to the evaluation and quality assessment of policies and programmes implemented in their countries (DK, EE, ES, FR, IT, PT, SK, SE). More attention to these aspects appears necessary, especially considering the fact that resources available are often limited. As a consequence, many members asked for a shift towards more ‘evidence-based’ policy-making, with greater emphasis on the identification and the cross-national dissemination of successful policies, programmes and methodologies.

In Estonia, the quality assessment of social service provision is overall weak, although some evidence-based programmes are being developed in the domains of child protection (e.g. parenting programmes) and education (e.g. prevention of school bullying). In France, a lack of scientific evaluation in French social policies has been observed (in particular in the fields of child care and child protection). Large-scale measurement of the long term impacts of social programmes should be performed, possibly using randomised controlled trials. In Italy, it would be fundamental to make data available on needs, implemented measures and client satisfaction. The Regional Development Department of the Košice Region in Slovakia pointed out that policy decisions were taken for a number of reasons that did not necessarily follow expert analysis and knowledge. The lack of regular assessment and policy monitoring was also flagged by the Association of Social Services Professionals in Portugal.
## Participants

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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin Mojžiš</td>
<td>Head, Liaison Office of Košice Region in Brussels</td>
<td>Slovakia (SK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mārtiņš Moors</td>
<td>Deputy Director, Head of Social Administration, Department of Welfare, Riga City Council</td>
<td>Latvia (LV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lise Plougmann Willer</td>
<td>Director, Citizen and Labour Market Department, City of Esbjerg / Association of Social Directors in Denmark (FSD)</td>
<td>Denmark (DK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Powell</td>
<td>Director, Adult Social Services and Housing, London Borough of Redbridge / Association of Directors of Adult Social Services in England (ADASS)</td>
<td>England (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirjana Radovan</td>
<td>Head, Service for EU Funds, Ministry of Social Policy and Youth</td>
<td>Croatia (HR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernanda Rodrigues</td>
<td>President, Association of Social Services Professionals</td>
<td>Portugal (PT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indrek Rohtla</td>
<td>Head, Social Care Service, Department of Social Welfare, Tartu City Government</td>
<td>Estonia (EE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastiano Sabato</td>
<td>Researcher, European Social Observatory (OSE – Observatoire Social Européen)</td>
<td>EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britta Spilker</td>
<td>Head, Department for International Affairs, German Association for Public and Private Welfare</td>
<td>Germany (DE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bérengère Steppé</td>
<td>Policy Officer, European Commission</td>
<td>EU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bart Vanhercke</td>
<td>Director, European Social Observatory (OSE – Observatoire Social Européen)</td>
<td>EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrone Vareikyte</td>
<td>Adviser on social issues, Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania</td>
<td>Lithuania (LT)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ESN staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Halloran</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alfonso Lara Montero</td>
<td>Policy Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonas Bylund</td>
<td>Operations and Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Nikolaj Japing</td>
<td>Policy Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marianne Doyen</td>
<td>Policy Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberto Dotta</td>
<td>Projects Officer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Practical information

Please book travel yourself. ESN will reimburse these costs (EUR 325 max) on receipt of the original tickets and boarding passes and a completed travel reimbursement form.

Transfers / Travel to Brussels

Please also arrange your own transfers from the airport to the hotel and return. Airport transfers will be reimbursed by ESN after the meeting in accordance with ESN's reimbursement of expenses specifications (see Travel Reimbursement Form).

From Zaventem airport, you can reach the hotel by:

- **Train + subway:** the train station is located inside the airport and regular trains run from there to Brussels Central Station (*Gare Centrale*). From there you can take subway lines 1 or 5 until Schuman station. The hotel is within 5 minutes of walking distance.

- **Bus:** a direct bus runs from the airport to Schuman roundabout (*Rond Point Shuman*). The bus line number is 12 and you can take it directly at the airport. Again, you can stop at Schuman and then walk to the hotel.

It is also possible to reach Brussels via Charleroi Airport (mainly low cost companies). From there, you can reach Brussels Midi station with a bus that takes approximately one hour. Timetables can be found here.

ACCOMMODATION

ESN will fund accommodation for you in Brussels for 1 night on 20 September at the **Aloft Brussels Schuman**, (see map and address on the next page). Should you require one extra night due to limited travel options during the days of the meeting, please let us know and ESN will look into it.

It *may be possible* to check into your room in the morning if the room is available. Failing that, the hotel will be able to store your luggage until check in time.

MEETING

The meeting will take place at the “**Representation of the Lazio Region in Brussels**” (map and address on the next page) on Monday 21 September from 9:00-16:30.

On 21 September delegates will meet in the hotel lobby at **8:45** and walk to the venue.

DINNER

An evening meal has been arranged on 20 September at walking distance from the hotel. The restaurant name is “Esprit de Sel”, Place Jourdan 52. Delegates will be met in the hotel lobby at 19:30 and walk to the restaurant. If you wish to go directly there, dinner will start at 20:00.
Address of the venue and hotel:

Representation of the Lazio Region in Brussels

Rond-Point Schuman 14 Schumanplein
1040 Bruxelles/Brussels
Phone: 0032 2 431 21 51
Web: http://www.lazioeuropa.it

Aloft Brussels Schuman

Place Jean Rey 3
1040 Bruxelles/Brussels
Phone: 0032 2 800 08 88
Web: http://www.aloftbrussels.com/