



European Social Services Index Working Group Meeting 2026

Date:

13 – 14 October 2026

Venue:

City of Brussels – Brucity Administrative Centre
Rue des Halles 4, 1000 Brussels
Belgium

ESN contacts:

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Introduction

The [European Social Services Index](#) (ESSI) is an initiative launched by the European Social Network (ESN) in 2023 to better understand and compare the situation of social services in different European Union (EU) Member States.

Each year, with support from our ESSI Working Group, we gather national data on several countries' **social services legislation, financing, coverage, and policies**. In 2026, we collected data from 19 countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

The data collected helps us provide evidence for the **European Commission** to formulate its recommendations to national governments within the framework of the **European Semester** – an annual review of national economic, social, and budgetary policies aimed at identifying socio-economic challenges in EU Member States and formulating proposals on how they could address these. ESN is involved in this process to ensure the European Commission fully understands the situation of social services and that its recommendations meet social services' needs.

This meeting will bring together members of our ESSI Working Group and European Commission officials to discuss the evidence we gathered and assess how it can feed into the European Semester.

Programme

Tuesday, 13 October

12:30-13:30	Registration and Lunch
13:30-14:00	Welcome and 2026 ESSI: Key Findings Christian Fillet, Chair of the Board, European Social Network TBC, City of Brussels Alfonso Lara Montero, Chief Executive Officer, European Social Network
14:00-14:50	2026 European Semester: Key Findings Katia Berti, Head of Unit – Employment and Social Aspects of the European Semester, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission TBC, European Parliament Q&A
14:50-16:00	Social Services Coordination Moderator: Alfonso Lara Montero Ivanka Shalapatova, Independent Consultant Federica Mancini, National Institute for Public Policy Analysis, Italy Edgar Diogo, Union of Portuguese Mutualities & Pedro Saraiva, Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, Portugal Graham Owen, Association of Directors of Social Welfare Services of Sweden, & Matilda Hansson, National Board of Health and Welfare, Sweden Q&A
16:00-16:30	Coffee break
16:30-17:30	Poverty and Social Inclusion Moderator: Adriana Masgras Ivanka Shalapatova, Independent Consultant Špela Zupan, Association of Centres for Social Work, Slovenia Marie Herborg Krogh, Executives of Danish Local Government Welfare Services, Denmark Q&A
17:30-17:45	Wrap-up Alfonso Lara Montero, Chief Executive Officer, European Social Network
19:00	Dinner

Wednesday, 14 October

08:45-9:00	Registration
09:00-10:00	Child Social Welfare Moderator: Adriana Masgras Ivanka Shalapatova, Independent Consultant Fotini Marini, University of West Attica – Social Administration Research Laboratory, Greece Caroline Strong, Irish Association of Social Workers, Ireland Q&A
10:00-11:10	Long-term Care Moderator: Alfonso Lara Montero Ivanka Shalapatova, Independent Consultant Iva Munzar, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy & Zorana Uzelac Bošnjak, Zagreb City Council – Department for Social Protection and People with Disabilities, Croatia Ieva Adomaityte-Subačiene, Vilnius University – Institute of Sociology and Social Work, Lithuania Valio Hristov, Bulgarian Association of Social Workers, Bulgaria Q&A
11:10-11:30	Coffee Break
11:30-12:50	Group Discussions and Reporting Back
12:50-13:00	Closing Alfonso Lara Montero, Chief Executive Officer, European Social Network
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:30	Meeting with City of Brussels