



European Social Services Index Working Group Meeting 2025

Date:

14 – 15 October 2025

Venue:

Lombardy Region – Delegation to the European Union
Place du Champ de Mars 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

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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 the support of our ESSI Working Group, we gather national data about several countries' **social services legislation, expenditure, and coverage**. In 2025, we collected data from 16 countries: Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, 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 gets involved in this process to ensure that the European Commission fully knows the situation of social services and that its recommendations meet social services' needs.

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

Programme

Tuesday, 14 October

9:00-11:30	<p>Site Visit at CPAS Brussels</p> <p><i>Participants will meet at 9:00 in the lobby of the Vintage Hotel, Rue Dejoncker 45, 1060 Brussels, and walk to CPAS Brussels' headquarters in the Marolles, historical quarter of Brussels.</i></p> <p><i>The site visit will begin at 9:30. The President and Directors of CPAS Brussels will welcome the participants and provide an overview of the organisation's statutory responsibilities, its range of services, and key programmes addressing local needs and realities on the ground. Participants will also be shown videos highlighting some of their flagship initiatives, including Maison Gertrude, an innovative centre that combines care for older people with cultural and artistic activities.</i></p>
12:30-13:30	<p>Registration and Lunch</p> <p>Lombardy Region – Delegation to the European Union Place du Champ de Mars 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium</p>
13:30-14:15	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian Fillet, Chair of the Board, European Social Network & Giuseppe Costa, Director, Lombardy Region • Key findings from the 2025 ESSI: Alfonso Lara Montero, Chief Executive Officer, European Social Network • Social findings from the 2025 European Semester: Katia Berti, Head of Unit – Employment and Social Aspects of the European Semester, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission <p>Q&A</p>
14:15-15:35	<p>Social Services Transformation</p> <p>Cross-country: Cassandra Simmons, Independent Consultant</p> <p>Country-specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graham Owen, Swedish Association of Social Services Directors & Matilda Hansson, National Board of Health and Welfare, Sweden • Caroline Strong, Irish Association of Social Workers, Ireland • Despina Cochliou, University of Nicosia, Cyprus • Riikka Väyrynen, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Finland <p>Q&A</p>
15:35-16:00	<p>Coffee break</p>

16:00-17:20

Long-term Care Services for Older People

Cross-country: Cassandra Simmons, Independent Consultant

Country-specific:

- **Špela Zupan**, Association of Centres for Social Work, Slovenia
- **Federica Mancini**, National Institute for Public Policy Analysis, Italy
- **Marcel van Druenen**, SAM, Netherlands

Q&A

17:20-17:30

Wrap-up

Alfonso Lara Montero, Chief Executive Officer, European Social Network



Wednesday, 15 October

08:45-9:00	<p>Registration</p> <p>Lombardy Region – Delegation to the European Union Place du Champ de Mars 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium</p>
09:00-10:00	<p>Long-term Care Services for Adults with Disabilities</p> <p>Cross-country: Cassandra Simmons, Independent Consultant</p> <p>Country-specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snježana Franković, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy & Zorana Uzelac Bošnjak, Zagreb City Council – Department for Social Protection and People with Disabilities, Croatia • Ana Radulescu, Centre for Training and Assessment in Social Work, Romania • Paweł Rabiej, Korczak University, Poland <p>Q&A</p>
10:00-11:00	<p>Child Protection & Domestic Violence Support Services</p> <p>Cross-country: Cassandra Simmons, Independent Consultant</p> <p>Country-specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arnaud Lopez, National Association of Directors of Social Care and Health in County Councils, France • Līva Ševčuna, Ministry of Welfare & Martins Moors, Riga City Council – Department for Welfare, Latvia • Stephen Vella & Sandra Abela, Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Malta <p>Q&A</p>
11:00-11:20	<p>Coffee Break</p>
11:20-12:35	<p>Moving Forward</p> <p><i>Small group reflections on the future development of the SSI, followed by brief presentations by each group's appointed rapporteur.</i></p>
12:35-12:45	<p>Closing</p> <p>Alfonso Lara Montero, Chief Executive Officer, European Social Network</p>
12:45-13:45	<p>Lunch</p>
13:45	<p>Departure to the European Parliament</p>