

ICSW EUROPE NEWSLETTER

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Table of Contents

A Message from the President	2
ICSW Germany	3
EAPN	3
Social Platform	4
OsloMet and Social Platform	5
Conference of INGOs	6
European Commission	6
EDY-Care	7
Conferences/Expert Meetings	8
Useful Links	9
Colophon	9



"Winter in Finland" © R.Wiman 2019

A Message from the President



"Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all". This became the next priority

theme for the UN Commission for Social Development (UN CSocD 2021). Quite a mouthful. The complicated sentence resulted from long negotiations merging the EU position ("just transition") with particularly African (and G77) preferences for discussing good practices in digital technology for development.

This year's theme was "Affordable housing and SP systems for all to address homelessness". There seems to be two camps: those who prefer narrow sectoral issues and those who advocate for the necessity of a systematic and integrated social policy approach to development. The latter is the central mandate of CSocD since the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995). Many speakers noted that also homelessness is a challenge that cannot be solved without broader social policies.

ICSW in its statement by ICSW UN representative Mr. Sergei Zelenov spoke for [universal social protection as investment in people and as an instrument for achieving the SDGs](#). A cross-sectoral policymaking that goes beyond piecemeal approach and narrow ministerial mandates is necessary. The same message was included in the [statement by the Finnish Minister for Social Affairs and Health, Ms. Aino-Kaisa Pekonen](#). She led the Finnish Government CSocD Delegation that included five (!) members from Finnish NGOs – including ICSW Finland. Involving NGOs in intergovernmental negotiations as equal partners is a rare but good practice that Finland has followed a long time. The message: governments alone can neither create nor manage social development.

No doubt, universal access to social protection can be baked also into this new "global theme of the year" provided that the focus of background work will not be gliding to technicalities of digital technology.

On the other hand, the theme aligns with the priorities of the new EU commission. Just recently the Commission released its Communication "[A strong Social Europe for Just Transitions](#)".

It is an ambitious effort to launch a broad dialogue aiming at jointly building an action plan for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The aim is to complement the new European growth strategy, the [European Green Deal](#) – that as such does not contain much of social policy.

The Commission invites [concrete commitments](#) on how the EPSR will be realized.

In major transformations there are always winners and losers. The ambitious goal towards the "greening" of Europe is surely not an exception. It will be a major technological, economic – and social – risk investment. In efforts to manage the challenges of climate neutrality by 2050, digitalization and demographic changes a fair deal does not result automatically.

Socially oriented policies are needed in order to reach a more eco-social Europe and to ensure that no people, groups or regions will be left behind. Sustainable development is an agenda of equity, fairness. It implies equity between – and also within – generations.

The current EU Commission looks promising from the social policy perspective. The President of the EU Commission, Ms. Ursula von der Leyen said: "People care about the future of our children and our society, and about fairness and equality in every sense of the word".

Broad social policy, good governance and people's participation are the key instruments for realizing fairness and equality. ICSW Europe together with members and partners advocates for such good practices.

Ronald Wiman, ICSW Europe President

ICSW Europe Members

ICSW Germany – Expectations of the German Association regarding the German EU Council presidency 2020



On 1st July 2020, the Federal Republic of Germany will assume the presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU). The German Association for Public and Private Welfare (Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V. – ICSW Germany) expects Germany to use its role to advocate for a social Europe in the Council and equally in the dialogue with the European Commission. To strengthen the European Union's social dimension, from the German Association's viewpoint, it is important to secure full implementation of the “European Pillar of Social Rights” (EPSR), structural funding that takes into account the rights and principles of the EPSR, a new EU gender equality strategy with a broad approach and initiatives to extend EU anti-discrimination rules. Successful elements of the “Europe 2020” strategy, especially the social key objectives, need to be continued in a new EU strategy for economic policy management from 2021. The German Association calls for national, regional and local interests and the interests of civil society to be broadly incorporated in the European process of shaping policy, in order to further strengthen acceptance of the European project amongst the citizens of the EU in future.

Full text is available at:

<https://www.deutscher-verein.de/en/uploads/dateien-stab-internationales/dv-17-19-expectations-german-eu-council-presidency-2020.pdf>

(source: ICSW Germany)

EAPN's response to the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 and Joint Employment Report 2020



Working for a Green and Social Deal that ends poverty

On 17th December 2019, the new European Commission adopted the “[Autumn Package](#)”, including the [Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy](#) (ASGS) 2020 and [Joint Employment Report](#) (JER).

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) presents its full analysis of the [Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 and Joint Employment Report](#).

Overall, the ASGS takes an important step forward to embracing the rhetoric of a more social, inclusive and sustainable economic model, embracing the SDGs and particularly the commitment to transform the current growth model into Green growth. However, it falls short of achieving an equal balance between social, environmental and economic. A Green Deal must also be a Social Deal – tangibly setting out how it will not only prevent ‘harm’ from climate change and transition as proposed by the European Green Deal, but actively reduce inequality and fight poverty, as part of a comprehensive 10 year social and sustainable post 2020 strategy. At the moment, although the European Pillar of Social Rights is mentioned, and has its own section, no mention is made of poverty or inequality or the structural changes and investment that is needed to achieve this – i.e. by investing in adequate welfare states: social protection/minimum income, quality jobs and services – particularly housing and health.

This is highly surprising given that Europe still has nearly 110 million people facing the risk of poverty and/or exclusion, marking a large shortfall from the original poverty target of Europe 2020. Whilst a stronger commitment is made to the engagement of EU and national parliaments, and social partners, civil society is conspicuously absent despite Guideline 7 and Recital 11 of the Employment Guidelines.

As in the last two years, there seems to be increased consistency between the main Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy and the findings of the Joint Employment Report.

However, the latter continues to mainly constitute a stock-taking exercise, presenting country statistics and policy measures, without sufficiently complementing them with an in-depth qualitative analysis, or policy guidance. A systematic assessment of the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights would need more than just the reference to the Social Scoreboard indicators.

Our key messages:

- 1) We need a coherent 10 year social and sustainable EU post 2020 strategy!
- 2) Refocus on 'ending Poverty' with a new poverty target, and EU integrated anti-poverty strategy, based on integrated active inclusion to ensure concrete results.
- 3) Ensure the Green Deal is Social: that the poor benefit and don't pay for transition.
- 4) Mainstream all social rights/principles throughout the ASGS and the European Semester supporting the action plan for implementation in all areas.
- 5) Give priority to social investment in strong welfare states: particularly an EU framework to ensure adequate minimum income as well as minimum/living wages, social protection and access to key public services as a social right! (housing, health, social services!)
- 6) Increase focus on person-centred, right-based, integrated support to quality, sustainable jobs, for all ages and excluded groups, avoiding punitive conditionality.
- 7) Promote a holistic approach to Education and Lifelong Learning as a social right.
- 8) Ensure at least 1 Social Rights CSR for each country, with a dedicated section in the Commission's Country reports assessing delivery on the EPSR/Social SDGs, including poverty.
- 9) Clarify that EU Structural Funds and Reform Support Programme should be used for 'social reform to guarantee social rights' not just for restructuring reforms aiming at reducing costs on public services and jobs.
- 10) Confirm/invest in Civil Society Organisations and dialogue with people with direct experience of poverty as equal partners.

For **more information**, please contact [Sian Jones](#), EAPN Policy Coordinator.

[Read the Analysis](#)

(source: EAPN)



Building Social Europe Annual Report 2019 out now



Social Platform has published **"Building Social Europe – Annual Report 2019"**, bringing together the highlights of an action-packed year of policy, advocacy and communications developments on the EU stage.

2019 was a year of renewal and rejuvenation at EU level, with the European Parliament elections in May and the introduction of a new European Commission in December. Social Platform and our members anchored our work in the momentum this created to call for a Europe that puts people and planet first, strong political will to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, and a shift towards an economy with the wellbeing of people at its core.

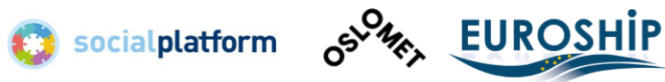
Annual Report 2019 features:

- How we influence: a recap of our advocacy, policy and communications work targeting the European Commissioners-designate hearings in the European Parliament, socialising the European Semester, investing in people, promoting sustainable Europe, and high-level speaking engagements;
- How we learn: an overview of our Social Learning Platform meetings, which bring members together for peer-to-peer learning;
- How we reach out: a look at our **second annual Flagship Conference in Helsinki, Finland**, our campaigns on the EU elections and the **Social Pillar**, and our 'Made in Social Europe' exhibition;
- How we plan ahead: an introduction to our Management Committee 2019-2021;
- Information about our members, our team, our projects and partnerships, and our finances.

[Read “Building Social Europe – Annual Report 2019” here](#)

(source: [Social Platform](#))

OsloMet and Social Platform to collaborate on future scenarios for Social Europe



About 50 representatives of European research institutes, universities, labour and civil society organisations from eleven European countries and the European Union gathered in **Oslo 27-28 February** to discuss how the social sciences can contribute to delivering Social Europe.

In a new project, “EUROSHIP – Closing gaps in European Social Citizenship”, Social Platform and OsloMet will work together to provide new insights into how the EU can support Member States in working towards ambitious implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

EUROSHIP is a three-year research project funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program. EUROSHIP will provide new knowledge about the effectiveness of social protection policies targeted at reducing poverty and social exclusion in Europe. The project involves researchers in Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Through the involvement of national and European stakeholders, Social Platform and OsloMet will develop policy recommendations on how to strengthen social citizenship at national and EU level.

Professor *Rune Halvorsen*, scientific coordinator of EUROSHIP, says:

“EU social citizenship must become meaningful and have more substantial content for those who are most at risk of poverty and social exclusion. People with low education and income must feel that they

have something to gain from being a member of the EU. It is critical that the EU manages to demonstrate its relevance for citizens' opportunities to live the life they have reasons to want for themselves.”

Kélig Puyet, Director of Social Platform, says:

“The European Pillar of Social Rights is the right tool to deliver better living and working conditions to all people in the EU. Its success hinges on a comprehensive implementation approach encompassing legislation and policies that set minimum social standards, balanced social and economic priorities in the European Semester process as the EU's framework for socio-economic governance, adequate investment in people at EU and national level as well as the meaningful involvement of civil society organisations. We hope that this project will help to highlight the most effective ways in which this can be achieved.”

The project's findings will improve the knowledge base necessary to formulate evidence-based and innovative policy options that support the EU and national governments to boost social citizenship for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

(source: Social Platform; available at: <https://www.socialplatform.org/news/osloMET-and-social-platform-to-collaborate-on-future-scenarios-for-social-europe/>)

Social Platform General Assembly

Date: 5 May 2020

Time: Afternoon followed by evening reception (timings TBC)

Place: Brussels Press Club, Rue Froissart 95, Brussels B-1000, Belgium

Please save the date. More information to follow.

Contact: [Silvana](#).

Social Platform – migration at the Croatian border

Throughout Croatia's EU presidency, Social Platform will be updating this small focus section regarding the treatment of migrants at the Croatian border, aimed at raising awareness and sharing information among members.

More information: <https://www.socialplatform.org/>

Conference of INGOs



The Expert Council on NGO Law has just published a study entitled [“Using Criminal Law to Restrict the Work of NGOs Supporting Refugees and Other Migrants in Council of Europe Member States”](#).

The study considers the situation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) carrying out humanitarian assistance and related work in support of refugees and other migrants in Council of Europe (CoE) Member States, and the extent to which criminal law and its enforcement impact on legitimate NGO activity.

The study finds that laws criminalising NGO activity, and the enforcement of such laws, impact significantly on legitimate NGO activity, negatively affecting freedom of association and related human rights. The laws themselves are vague and lack legal certainty in the way in which they have been applied and the limitations placed on lawful NGO activities are often neither necessary nor proportionate.

The Expert Council on NGO Law is preparing guidelines based on this study to help CoE Member States ensure that their law and practice when taking action against trafficking, smuggling and border control is consistent with applicable European

standards governing freedom of association and the rights of NGOs.

[Full study is available HERE](#)

(source: Conference of INGOs)

European Commission



Commission presents first reflections on building a strong social Europe for just transitions

On 14th January, the Commission presented a **Communication on building a strong social Europe for just transitions**.

The Communication sets out how social policy will help deliver on the challenges and opportunities of today. It proposes action at the EU level over the coming months, and seeks feedback on further action at all levels in the area of employment and social rights. In conjunction with publication of the Communication, the Commission launched the first phase of a consultation with social partners – businesses and trade unions – on the issue of fair minimum wages for workers in the EU. The Communication and consultation build on the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), proclaimed by EU institutions and leaders in November 2017. While Europe has some of the highest standards of living, best working conditions and most effective social protections in the world, changes such as the move to a climate-neutral economy, digitalisation and demographic shifts will present the workforce with new challenges and opportunities. The European Green Deal – Europe's new growth strategy – must

ensure that Europe remains the home of the world's most advanced welfare systems and is a vibrant hub of innovation and competitive entrepreneurship.

This article and current economic and financial affairs can be read in January “[Economic and Financial Affairs, ECFIN E-news 210](#)” issue of Newsletter.

Other topics in this issue:

Top Story

- Financing the green transition: The European Green Deal Investment Plan and Just Transition Mechanism

Viewpoint

- *Ursula von der Leyen*, President of the European Commission.

More News

- Commission welcomes agreement on €500 million Macro-Financial Assistance programme for Jordan.
- President *von der Leyen* and College of Commissioners visit Zagreb to discuss priorities as Croatian Presidency of the EU begins.
- Investment Plan: EU invests €168 million in sustainable transportation, elderly care, and treatment of cancer and rare diseases.

Selected Speeches (January 14, 2020).

Pdf version of the Newsletter is available [here](#).

The **online version** can be read [here](#).



(source: European Commission – ECFIN E-news 210)

EDY-Care



The Final dissemination event of the [EDY-CARE](#) Project (Innovative School Education Methodologies and Tools for Guaranteeing Social Inclusion of Young Carers) took place in Brussels on **19th February 2020** at Palais des Académies, Brussels.

The **Edy-Care project** – funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ programme – aims to empower school professionals so that they can address and respond to the needs of young carers.

Young carers are defined as “children and young persons under 18 years who provide or intend to provide care, assistance or support to another family member. They carry out significant or substantial caring tasks, often on a regular basis, and assume a level of responsibility that would usually be associated with an adult”.

Caring responsibilities can have a negative impact on young carers' education, as they can prevent them from working productively at schools (because of the anxiety related to their caring role), maintaining a regular frequency of classes, reaching learning goals and finalising formal education of high school. The effects in the short term (under-achievement, absence and drop-outs) can have consequences in the long term (low employability due to lower educational qualifications and attitudes towards higher education).

Young carers have been identified as being at higher risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

Against this backdrop, the Edy-Care project – running from October 2017 until March 2020 – aimed to investigate concrete ways to maximize young carers' learning opportunities and improve their social inclusion.

The event addressed, among others, the following questions:

- What are the challenges faced by young carers in relation with their educational experience?
- What good practices exist in Europe to support young carers?
- What concrete actions can we undertake to enable young carers to reach their goals in life and to thrive?

The event was attended by young carers, school professionals, service providers, policymakers, representatives from carers organisations, at regional, national and European level.

The final agenda of the event is available at the [event page](#).

(source: www.eurocarers.org)

Notification of acceptance letters have been sent to all accepted abstract Authors. The accepted abstract Authors are now invited to register within Early Registration Deadline.

Scientific programme

European Social Services Conference

8-10 July 2020 | Hamburg (Germany)



Conferences/Expert Meetings



SWESD conference: June 28th – July 1st, 2020

Key dates for SWSD 2020:

Early registration deadline: **4th May 2020**
~~9th March 2020~~

Late registration deadline: **31st May 2020**
~~6th April 2020~~

Final programme: **May 2020**

Across Europe, we have seen a growing emphasis on care provided in the community putting personal needs and relationships at the heart of social service practice. Policies are increasingly aiming to transform health and social care services in order to reach people in their homes and communities. The focus has also shifted to early, effective interventions for children and their families, young people, and proactive support for people with long-term health conditions and their families. Rethinking planning, implementation and evaluation of community care, the conference aims to inspire with examples, aspire for change, and dare for better outcomes for children and families, young people, older people, migrants, people with mental health problems or disabilities.

More about the conference is available [here](#).

(source: *European Social Services Conference*; <https://essc-eu.org/>)

Useful Links

United Nations (Economic and Social Council) – ICSW Statement at 58th session of the Commission for Social Development:

<https://undocs.org/E/CN.5/2020/NGO/2>

Statement by Ms. *Aino-Kaisa Pekonen* – Minister of Social Affairs and Health, Finland:

<http://statements.unmeetings.org/media2/23732252/finland-item-3a-.pdf>

European Commission: A strong Social Europe for Just Transitions:

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs_20_49

A European Green Deal:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

European Commission – concrete commitments on realization of the EPSR:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1487>

ICSW Germany – Expectations of the German Association regarding the German EU Council presidency 2020:

<https://www.deutscher-verein.de/en/uploads/dateien-stab-internationales/dv-17-19-expectations-german-eu-council-presidency-2020.pdf>

EAPN – Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 and Joint Employment Report:

<https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/EAPN-EAPN-RESPONSE-TO-THE-ASGS-2020-AND-JER-2020-4044.pdf>

Building Social Europe – Annual Report 2019 – Social Platform:

<https://www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/social-platform-annual-report-2019-web.pdf>

OsloMet and Social Platform collaboration on future scenarios for Social Europe:

<https://www.socialplatform.org/news/oslomet-and-social-platform-to-collaborate-on-future-scenarios-for-social-europe/>

EDY-Care Project:

<https://eurocarers.org/current-projects/edycare/>

Colophon

ICSW Europe registered office is located at the municipality of Utrecht (The Netherlands).

The name of the Association is: International Council on Social Welfare Europe, abbreviated to: ICSW Europe.

The Newsletter of ICSW European Region is published quarterly. Material may be freely reproduced or cited provided the source is acknowledged. Contributions on social welfare from all sectors of the international community are welcome.

Contributions and comments can be sent to:

ICSW Europe
Gabriela Siantova, Secretary and Editor
E-mail: gsiantova@gmail.com

ICSW European Region:

President: Ronald Wiman (Finland)
Vice-President: Jean-Michel Hôte (France)
Members of Executive Committee:
Cornelia Markowski (Germany),
Vadim Moldovan (Moldova),
Njål Petter Svensson (Norway)

Global Office:
International Council on Social Welfare
Website:
<http://www.icsw.org>
E-mail: icsw@icsw.org

