

ICSW EUROPE NEWSLETTER

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Rainbow flag at Defreggerhaus in almost 3.000 m above sea level East Tyrol, Austria

author of the photo: © Max Rubisch

A Message from the President



Dear readers of our newsletter,

in the seminars and newsletters of the last years we spoke a lot about the different crises that hit our society: the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian war against Ukraine, the war in Middle East, the rising costs for

food and housing and the growing climate crisis. All these insecurities have a devastating effect on mental health, especially in vulnerable groups.

The European Commission carried out extensive consultations in the years 2022/2023 between Member States, citizens and stakeholders in the main areas of mental health and published a **“Communication on a comprehensive Approach to Mental Health”** on 7 June 2023. The new approach recognises that mental health strongly involves many policy areas, such as employment, education, research, digitalisation, urban planning, culture, environment and climate. This cross-sectoral approach aims to put physical health on par with mental health.

The Country Health Profiles 2023 showed the following facts:

“Worries, anxieties and feelings of depression caused by the devastating effects of the pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, climate change and loss of biodiversity, unemployment and rising living costs, the pressures of the digital sphere and social media, all have exacerbated the already poor levels of mental health, especially for children and young people.

There is an unequal distribution of mental health problems between population groups, with depression being more prevalent among women and in population groups with lower income and education levels.

The need for action was emphasised in a recent [Eurobarometer survey](#) on mental health (October 2023). The survey showed that 46% of Europeans

experienced an emotional or psychosocial problem, such as feeling depressed or anxious, in the past twelve months.

One out of every two individuals dealing with a mental health issue did not seek assistance from a professional.

Already before the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 6 people in the EU suffered from mental health issues, at a cost of 4% of GDP.

The total costs of mental health problems are estimated at more than 4% of GDP (more than € 600 billion) across the 27 EU countries and the United Kingdom ([Health at a Glance Europe 2018 report](#)).

The [2022 Health at a Glance report](#) showed that almost one in two young Europeans report unmet needs for mental health care, and the share of young people reporting symptoms of depression in several EU countries more than doubled during the pandemic.”

Good health and well-being (including also mental health) is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030. It is also one of the key elements of the Disability Rights Convention of the United Nations. So it is obvious: without taking into account the situation and the needs of persons with mental health problems, it is not possible to reach the goals of the Agenda 2030 and the goals of the Disability Rights Convention.

It is with this background that ICSW Sweden together with ICSW Europe will organise a Seminar on 29 November 2024 in Stockholm with the title **“Mental Health – Human Rights and Participation”**. We will discuss the situation of people with mental health problems, especially their right to participate in society and their right to a decent living standard. The seminar will be a hybrid event: you can participate online or in person. It will be followed by our annual General Assembly.

I cordially invite all our member organisations and I hope to see many of you in Stockholm.

Have a beautiful autumn and stay healthy!

Max Rubisch
President of ICSW Europe

ICSW Europe Scientific Seminar



ICSW Europe 2024 Scientific Seminar

“Mental Health – Human Rights and Participation”

ICSW Europe in cooperation with ICSW Sweden is organising a scientific seminar on the topic **“Mental Health – Human Rights and Participation”**.

The event will take place on:

29 November 2024, Friday

(from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

Venue:

SWEDEN

Stockholm

Ersta Institution located in Södermalm

Further detailed information and the programme of the Scientific seminar will be sent to all ICSW Europe members in due time.

Follow the information on the website: www.icsw.org

ICSW Europe 2024 General Assembly

ICSW Europe 2024 General Assembly (GA) will take place on:

30 November 2024, Saturday

(provisional timing:
at 10:00-12:00 CET; 12:30-14:30 CET)

Venue:

SWEDEN

Stockholm

Frälsningsarmen (Salvation army), Nybrogatan 79b

Agenda of the GA

- 1) Opening and Checking of Voting Rights (paid -up members)
- 2) Approval of the Minutes of the GA on 1 December 2023
- 3) Election of ICSW Europe Board members 2025-2026, (for approval and decision) – results of electronic voting
- 4) Presentation of ICSW Europe Annual Activity Report 2024
- 5) Report of 2024 from the Treasurer (for adoption and discharging of responsibility, after the auditors have made their comments)
- 6) Statement by Auditors for 2024 accounts (for approval and decision)
- 7) Election of Auditors and Election Committee members (2 year terms)
- 8) Updating of the Budget for 2024 and Budget for 2025
- 9) Discussion about the Development of ICSW
- 10) Any Other Matters Arising
- 11) Closing the General Assembly

(source of the photo: iStock. Available at: <<https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/old-town-in-stockholm-sweden-gm523395133-51237318>>)

Social Platform builds its work on a Wellbeing Economy

For a long time, the end-goal of our economic systems has been narrowly focused on achieving 'growth'. However, with rising socio-economic inequalities, 1 in 5 Europeans at risk of poverty or social exclusion and having globally crossed six out of nine [planetary boundaries](#), it's clear that our current system is not only ignoring the needs of people and planet, but also inflicting harm on our societies.

As Social Platform, we understand that to achieve our mission of sustainable, long-term social progress, we must have an economic system that works to enable this change. But what would this system look like?

A '**Wellbeing Economy**' is an economy designed to serve people and the planet, not the other way around. It means that addressing everyday challenges and problems people face, such as living conditions, social protection and access to care and services are not secondary objectives but measurements of economic progress.

Existing international and European work on a wellbeing economy highlights 5 main objectives that broadly define a wellbeing economy:

- Purpose: the need to agree upon and work towards a common goal of an economy that ensures sustainable and inclusive wellbeing. Policy design and implementation must prioritise human and planetary wellbeing and business models must put social and environmental purpose at the heart of their work.
- Fairness: the need to ensure justice in all its dimensions at the heart of economic systems, through aspects like employment that delivers purpose and means for a decent livelihood, safe and healthy working conditions, and fair distribution of wealth.

- Dignity: the respect of fundamental human rights, the provision of resilient public services to ensure that everyone has enough to live in comfort, safety and happiness.
- Nature: a healthy relationship between people and planet as the foundation for physical and mental health, addressing the uneven impacts of climate change as well as climate change mitigation and achieving climate neutrality in a socially just way.
- Participation: transparent and democratic institutions enable structured meaningful participation of diverse stakeholders, including thriving and inclusive organised civil society and trade union movements, throughout decision-making processes and policy implementation.

Building on our work in the [SPES project](#) on sustainability transitions and the [MERGE project](#) on pathways to sustainable and inclusive wellbeing, Social Platform is taking this work further, aiming to define from a social perspective what is needed to achieve a wellbeing economy. As a first step, to start the learning process, we organised a Social Learning Platform on the topic. The objective of the event was to provide a learning opportunity for Social Platform members about ongoing work on a wellbeing economy at European level. As an external expert, we invited Alba Godefrey, from [EuroHealthNet](#), who is engaged in the European Wellbeing Economy Coalition to present on the state of play of work on a wellbeing economy work in the EU and upcoming opportunities for EU-level civil society organisations to engage on the topic.

While there are some existing approaches to the wellbeing economy both at national level (Wellbeing economy governments) and initial [commitments at EU level](#), obtained during the Finnish Council Presidency in 2019, several challenges to achieving a wellbeing economy remain. Lack of political will to change, short-term thinking as well as identification of the right metrics and indicators mean that wellbeing economy considerations have not been mainstreamed into EU decision-making.

Social Platform and other civil society organisations have an important role to play to support this work, to ensure that wellbeing economy ideas gain prominence on the EU agenda, help shape the narrative and serve as a link with communities at national and local level. As a next step, we will build

on the knowledge gained on the wellbeing economy concept to start shaping our upcoming position on the topic.

(source: Social Platform: Social Platform builds its work on a Wellbeing Economy. [online]. [cit. 2024-10-12]. Available at: <<https://www.socialplatform.org/news/social-platform-starts-work-on-a-wellbeing-economy/>>)

[The] publication also looks at the diverse the complexity of informal care, the need to empower older women in the labour market, the multifold impact of unvalued caregiving and the role of informal carers in strengthening intergenerational solidarity at work and in society.

[The document] also provide[s] three policy recommendations for enhancing the position of informal carer, both at work and in society.



Work-life integration Policy paper



[READ THE POSITION PAPER](#)

(source: AGE Platform Europe: Work-life integration. Policy paper. [online]. [cit. 2024-9-12]. Available at: <<https://www.age-platform.eu/work-life-integration-age-policy-paper/>>)

International Federation of Social Workers

3 September 2024

AGE Platform Europe has finalised a Policy paper on “Work-life integration”. The paper has been sent to the EESC, European Economic and Social Committee, and will be used and disseminated at the event organised by COFACE.

AGE position paper explores the holistic concept of “work-life integration” that we are advocating for. Unlike the notion of work-life balance, work-life integration emphasizes the interconnectedness of personal and professional domains, acknowledging that our careers encompass all roles we play in life.

This shift in understanding better reflects the lived experiences of informal carers, allowing for a more comprehensive approach to supporting their needs. This change will be even more critical as the number of workers who also serve as informal carers is expected to rise significantly along with the current demographic trends.



Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Week 1-10 October 2024

Kicking off on 1 October with the [United Nation's International Day of Older Persons \(UNIDOP2023\)](#) and concluding on 10 October in conjunction with the [World Health Organization's World Mental Health Day](#), this 3rd Annual ten-day initiative launched by the [International Psychogeriatric Association \(IPA\)](#) is focused on raising awareness of the importance for *Better Mental Health for Older People*.

Social workers have a central role in ensuring that rights and dignity are upheld for all in later life and that everyone can thrive as they age. As supporters of IPA, we invite all social workers to check out the [website](#) and [social media](#). There [are] videos and resources to enable better support for mental health in later life across the globe.

(source: IFSW: *Social Work news*. [E-mail]. [cit. 2024-10-13]).

Council of Europe



The autumn Session of the Conference of INGOs (CINGOs) will take place on the **14–16 October 2024** in a hybrid format.

The three year Strategy of the CINGOs will be adopted by the General Assembly.

Good to know: as part of the process for the implementation of the Reykjavik Summit decisions, the Council of Europe has established a new Intergovernmental Steering Committee for Democracy (CDDEM) which was given the task to prepare a set of guidelines for Civil Society participation in the CoE Intergovernmental Committee work.

More Information in the next NL

(source: *Conference of INGOs: Conference of INGOs – Newsroom*. [online]. [cit. 2024-10-12]. Available at: <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/newsroom>>)

Publications

Digitalisation and older people: our call to EU Policy Makers



AGE Platform have published their contribution to the EU debate on the issues of digitalisation and ageing, including recommendations to achieve a smooth digital transition for everyone, at all ages.

[Read the full paper here](#)

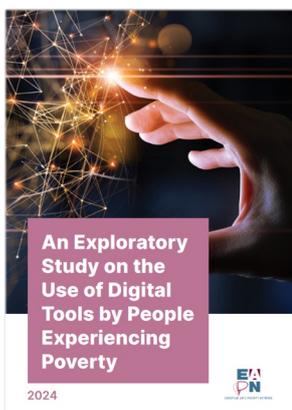
(source: *AGE Platform: Digitalisation and older people: our call to EU Policy Makers*. [online]. [cit. 2024-9-24]. Available at: <https://www.age-platform.eu/content/uploads/2024/07/AGE_Paper-on-Digitalisation-and-Older-People_June-2024_FINAL-1.pdf>).

An Exploratory study on the Use of Digital Tools by People Experiencing Poverty



Do you think Digitalisation is deepening poverty and social exclusion?

EAPN [has launched] a new report shedding light on how the increasing digitalisation of welfare services exacerbates existing disparities.



The report titled “An Exploratory Study on the Use of Digital Tools by People Experiencing Poverty” highlights alarming new risks of exclusion and poverty linked to the rise of digital-only services.

- **Digitalisation of the welfare state has been motivated by an austerity-driven agenda.** It has led to a reduction in the number of public servants, a downsizing of physical services centers and an overreliance on automated, algorithm-driven decision-making processes and the exclusion of large shares of population from public service delivery.

(source: EAPN: Flash news – Digital Rights edition. [E-mail]. [cit. 2024-10-13]).

[Download Report](#)

This report examines the current landscape surrounding the digitalisation of the welfare state and essential services and its impact on people experiencing poverty.

It also explores the consequences of the use of AI by European Member States on the access to social protection schemes and support services.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, essential services rapidly transitioned to online platforms as an urgent measure to keep people safe. Although this was an ongoing, long-standing shift at the time of the outbreak of the pandemic, it was not tailored to accommodate the needs of individuals experiencing poverty, especially those facing digital exclusion.

The Report concludes that:

- **Digital only systems are further marginalising people experiencing poverty.** The study shows that digitalisation of the welfare state became the only option in the EU to access digital welfare services, while neglecting the needs of people experiencing poverty and the principles of transparency and accountability.
- **Artificial intelligence and automated processes used in welfare services disproportionately affect vulnerable groups,** such as single parents and people with disabilities, where personal interaction is crucial for fair decision-making. Therefore, the digitalisation of the welfare state has led to automated discrimination against people living in poverty.

Conferences/Expert Meetings

Innovations in Social Work and Social Development: Uniting Communities across the Globe for Sustainable Change



Greetings from Rajagiri College of Social Sciences and the International Consortium for Social Development!

We are thrilled to announce the 24th ICSW Biennial Conference, themed “**Innovations in Social Work and Social Development: Uniting Communities across the Globe for Sustainable Change,**” on **January 8-10, 2025.**

We are pleased to invite you to join us in celebrating the 50th year of ICSW and the 25th DYUTI annual conference (hosted by the Rajagiri School of Social Work), which will merge with the 24th ICSW Biennial Conference. The conference will bring together institutions, leaders, and professionals in social work and social development to collaborate, exchange ideas, and collectively address existing challenges and opportunities in global development.

We kindly request your presence and encourage you to share this invitation with all relevant departments and encourage student participation and paper presentations.

CONFERENCE Flyer

NB: You are most welcome to communicate your plans for participation to icsd2025@rajagiri.edu

(source: Rajagiri College of Social Sciences and the International Consortium for Social Development: 24th ICSD Biennial Conference. [online]. [cit. 2024-9-13]. Available at: <<https://conference.rajagiri.edu/icsd/>>)

Useful Links

ICSW Europe Scientific Seminar “Mental Health – Human Rights and Participation:

<https://www.icsw.org/news/12-regions/27-europe/251-save-the-date-sweden-2024>

AGE Platform Europe: Work-life integration. Policy paper:

https://www.age-platform.eu/content/uploads/2024/09/2024_Work-Life-Integration_AGE-Policy-Paper.pdf

IFSW: Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Week 1-10 October 2024:

<https://awarenessweek.ipa-online.org/>

EAPN: An Exploratory study on the Use of Digital Tools by People Experiencing Poverty:

https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/eapn-643004_Report-06.08-5973.pdf

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:

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