

ICSW EUROPE NEWSLETTER

1/2023

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“We shall guarantee a minimum standard of living and a decent life within universal social protection schemes.”

author of the photo: © Jean-Michel Hôte

A Message from the President



Germany, Switzerland and Austria have a long tradition in Three-Countries-Seminars on common issues in social policy. On 24 and 25 November 2022, the Swiss Conference for Social Welfare SKOS, the German Association and the Austrian Committee for Social Work ÖKSA met for the eighth

time for a Three-Countries-Meeting within the framework of ICSW Europe. The meeting was held in Basel, Switzerland, and was excellently organised by our member organisation SKOS. Having in mind the COVID pandemic, the war against Ukraine, a new migration and the extraordinary rising of the living costs, the three countries chose the theme **"The system of social security and the effect of crises"**.

We discussed what effects the actual crises have on vulnerable groups, what the political reactions in the three countries were and what strategies would be necessary. It was an excellent meeting of about 25 experts and a good exchange between theory and practice. Some of the main findings of this meeting were:

- **In the crises of the last years, the welfare state proved its worth – but not for everyone:** people who were in difficult situations before COVID had more and more problems. This is valid for long-term unemployed persons, people in precarious jobs or persons with poor housing conditions. The closing of schools had the effect that the schools lost the contact to a part of the young people completely. The social differences between the pupils have increased. Especially the rate of health problems, psychic crises, anxiety disorders and depressions of young people has increased dramatically.
- **In a crisis, social inequalities increase:** the costs for energy, food and housing increased as a consequence of the Russian war against Ukraine. Not only the poor people, but more and more people from the lower middle-class

do not know how to cover their expenses. At the same time the profits in some private industries are rising in an extraordinary way.

- **The crisis creates new inequalities:** A crisis is very expensive – in a small country like Austria the federal government paid 48 Billion Euro for benefits in the COVID pandemic. On the one hand there was over-compensation for some enterprises. At the same time, certain groups were left behind: some people were not entitled to benefits, did not claim or simply did not know that they exist.

At the meeting it was said **"Poverty is a social thermometer"**. An increasing rate of poverty shows growing problems in all parts of society. What we need now are better incentives for work and at the same time an effective social security system that covers also the costs for housing and energy. The states could finance these measures by taxing the excess profits that were made in the private sector during the crises.

Crises can provide new impulses for politics: During COVID we saw that the governments introduced immediately new measures that were not possible before. With technical means new forms of labour and new forms of communication were created. Another aspect is the problem of labour shortage, especially in the health and the caring sector, that we face today. The new refugees from Ukraine could be a chance to find labour force, but political decisions often impede their access to the labour market.

Crises can be a chance to learn – but for this, the crises and its effects must be documented. We need reliable data, statistics and long-term studies. We must be ready to evaluate the crisis and to look how it was managed. We must go to the local level and talk to the people in a participative way. A critical evaluation and public discussion would also be a positive contribution to our democracy. Only if we discuss the management of the last crisis in an open and transparent way we can learn from our mistakes – and this is the precondition for political decisions to be better prepared for the next crisis.

To conclude I want to quote the German sociologist *Jan Paul Heisig*. In an interview about the social consequences of the pandemic he said in April 2020:

"The crisis shows us in our direct environment and also globally how we as human beings are dependent from each other and that my actions can have immediate consequences for other persons. The hope is that this experience will lead to a stronger orientation towards common welfare, towards community spirit. This is the positive scenario and it is not impossible that it will be a long-term effect of the crisis. But it is not sure."

What Heisig says is valid not only for the COVID pandemic but also for the war in Europe, the energy crisis and the global climate crisis. ICSW should work to strengthen common welfare and solidarity.

Our Three-Countries-Seminars are a very valuable tool of exchange and discussion. The next one will be in May 2024 in Berlin with the theme "Labour shortage in Education and Healthcare".

Max Rubisch, ICSW Europe President

ICSW Europe Members

SKOS CSIAS COSAS

Schweizerische Konferenz für Sozialhilfe
Conférence suisse des institutions d'action sociale
Conferenza svizzera delle istituzioni dell'azione sociale
Conferenza svizzera da l'agid social



Deutscher Verein
für öffentliche
und private Fürsorge e.V.



ICSW Expert Meeting

**Livelihood security and the social security system
under the influence of crises**

24–25 November 2022

Basel, Switzerland

Introduction

On 24th and 25th November 2022, the Swiss Conference for Social Welfare SKOS, the German Association and the Austrian Committee for Social Work ÖKSA met for the eighth time for a language-regional experts' meeting within the framework of ICSW Europe. The meeting in Basel was organised by SKOS. All three organisations are members of the ICSW.

In the circle of selected experts from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, experiences and resulting challenges of the current crises on future livelihood security and the social security system were discussed.

The Corona pandemic, which has not yet been overcome, the Ukraine war and the requirements of climate protection pose extraordinary challenges for the state and society as a whole in all three countries. Rising prices, changed conditions with regard to energy supply and the renewed admission of refugees place considerable demands on social security, especially the minimum and basic security systems.

The crises are accelerating long-term trends such as digitalisation and the structural change of the world of work and the labour market with considerable effects on social security. Although basic security in Germany, social assistance in Austria and social assistance in Switzerland differ in terms of amount, mechanisms and design, it is possible to speak of a fundamentally well-functioning assistance system in all three countries. However, the benefits of the minimum/basic security systems are under socio-political pressure everywhere. The handling and management of the crises and the necessary developments of the respective protection systems in Switzerland, Austria and Germany were discussed.

The experiences and questions with the current challenges from neighbouring countries should help to question one's own strategies and consider new approaches.

Twenty five experts from academia, public authorities and independent organisations took part.

Conference report

The two half-days of the meeting were structured in the same way. One presentation per country was used to introduce the topic. In the subsequent moderated discussion, questions were clarified and selected aspects were explored in greater depth.

Thursday, 24 November 2022

On Thursday, three thematic focuses were devoted to the effects of the current crises in the three countries. *Bernhard Heeb*, Head of Migration + Integration, Social Welfare Canton Basel-Stadt,

presented the consequences of the crises on the practice of Social Welfare Canton Basel-Stadt. Dr *Johannes Kopf*, Director of the Public Employment Service Austria, explained how the labour market in Austria changed during the Corona pandemic. *Karl-Josef Cranen*, Head of Office, Job Centre Düren, presented what practical experience has been gained in the work integration of unemployed people in basic benefits in Germany.

In the moderated discussion round, the measures taken to compensate for inflation in the three countries were presented at the basic level and beyond. While Germany and Austria have to deal with inflation of over 10%, in Switzerland it is 3%. Accordingly, the measures in the two countries are more diverse than in Switzerland and include various one-off payments and bonuses. There was also lively discussion on the question of how support money is distributed. Both the needs test and the watering can on principle have their advantages and disadvantages from a social and socio-political point of view.

There was agreement that benefits for the broader lower middle class are important for an active poverty policy and the acceptance of the welfare state among the population. The issue of threshold effects was also addressed. All three countries are searching for the optimal balance between sufficiently high benefits and at the same time ensuring that gainful employment pays.

As the last item on the programme, Dr *Emilie Rosenstein*, Professor of Social Policy at the School of Social Work and Health, Lausanne/University of Applied Sciences an Arts Western Switzerland gave a presentation entitled "Fit for crisis?".

Friday, 25 November 2022

The three country-specific presentations were held on the topic of "Measures to secure live-lihoods and social security – from special solutions to the rule". In Germany, the citizen's income introduced on 1/1/2023 actually perpetuates regulations that were originally intended only as a short-term crisis response. In Austria and Switzerland, on the other hand, the special solutions introduced in the course of the pandemic have largely disappeared.

In the discussion that followed, the question of how system changes can be achieved was discussed. There was a plea to work for small advances in the

system on the one hand. On the other hand, our organisations should also have resources to think fundamentally about simplifying the system. Merging the different branches of social security would be customer-oriented and efficient. It would reduce the administrative burden so that more time could be spent on actual counselling. As long as the current complex system exists, good, addressee-oriented communication is essential. In addition, people should be accompanied as well as possible on their way from branch to branch of social security.

Conclusion and outlook

In summary, it can be said that social inequalities increase in a crisis. It is then that the welfare state plays a particularly important role. During the Corona pandemic, the welfare state proved its worth, but not for everyone. Certain groups were not entitled to benefits, deliberately did not claim them or simply did not know about state support.

The fact that crises develop very unpredictably poses great challenges to the welfare state. It must (re-)act quickly and flexibly. However, crises are also an opportunity in that they can provide important impulses for the further development of the social security system.

How well the welfare state copes with a crisis can only be assessed if the crisis and its effects are documented at all. This requires long-term studies that also include the local level in terms of state and non-state support. The gap between services and individual needs as well as non-receipt must be analysed in detail. In doing so, expert and affected persons' knowledge must also be included in a participatory manner.

The participants of the meeting agreed that the event was very successful. The quality of the discussions, the contact with colleagues from the other two countries and the connection between practice and science were very enriching. The opportunity to engage in professional debate and to further develop one's own position in this context was also very much appreciated.

author: **Andrea Beeler**, SKOS Switzerland



To acknowledge World Social Work Day 2023, **ICSW Sweden** co-organised two events. The first took place online and was a collaboration between ICSW Sweden, Mälardalen University and the Division of Social Work, Linköping University.

Invited speaker was *Kazushige Kinugasa*, Ph.D. of Social Welfare, from Japan. *Kazushige's*, who has been active within social work practice and research for over 30 years and has received prizes for his efforts, lecture had the title *"sympathy" for helping relationship; from the social work practice for a child who refuses to go to school*.



Kazushige Kinugasa

The point of departure was that there is a rapid increase in youth who do not attend junior high school. According to *Kazushige*, the reasons for these are several, and often intertwined in complex ways. Economics problem in the family, often due to divorce where it is difficult for a single mother to provide for the family, lack of support for students with neurodevelopmental disorders, mental health issues such as depression and stress due to pressures to succeed. Moreover, there is a need of more recourses for social workers who can support children not attending school. Often, the issue of students not attending school is explained by deficiencies in the family or of the individual. *Kazushige* stated that increased focus should view this issue as a societal problem. The main solution to this problem was, *Kazushige* emphasised, to build relationships, doing things together with the child to achieve mutual meaning-making between the social worker and the child. The presentation was followed by lively discussions, where much focus was on comparing Sweden and Japan regarding how the issue of youth who do not attend junior high school.

Both similarities and differences between the countries were raised. More than 60 persons attended and the attendees were students, teachers, practitioners, researchers, and members of ICSW.

The second activity during this day was on-site at Campus Norrköping, Linköping University, Sweden. Invited speaker was *Lovisa Landälv* who is coordinator of the trafficking center Safe Havens which is operated by The Salvation Army. Departing from the title "Modern slavery", *Lovisa* placed the issue of human trafficking in a global context, and illustrated how and why human trafficking is upheld and what characterizes this problem in contemporary society. Although complex and involving a broad spectrum of products and services, some examples were children working in mines, persons with household duties, sexual exploitation, construction work, farming and within hotels and restaurants. These various types of exploitations were intertwined, constituting multiple exploitation. Although, it is difficult to find how many are affected, approximately 30–50 million persons are victims of human trafficking worldwide. Larger societal structures such as racism, discrimination, wars, oppression, forced migration and poverty are the main factors making people vulnerable for human trafficking. There are laws, on international and national level on human trafficking and being a victim of this is, in line with the Declaration of Human Rights, viewed as a serious violation of an individual's human rights. Convicting someone for human trafficking is however difficult, as victims are in a vulnerable position.



Lovisa Landälv
photo: Saga Llyod

In Sweden, The Salvation Army strives to highlight human trafficking through prevention by campaign work to increase public awareness and influence policies, offer support to victims and their families and integrate victims into society. Moreover, in Sweden potential victims of human trafficking have

the right to housing, material support, health care, psychological support, legal counselling and interpretations. *Lovisa* emphasized the importance of social work within this context, as social workers have knowledge on how to meet and work with persons in these vulnerable situations. About 40 persons (students, teachers, researchers and ICSW members) attended the lecture which evoked engaged discussion.



Axel Ågren, ICSW Sweden President

SKOS Switzerland – A member's reaction to A Letter from the President

SKOS CSIAS COSAS

Schweizerische Konferenz für Sozialhilfe
Conférence suisse des institutions d'action sociale
Conferenza svizzera delle istituzioni dell'azione sociale
Conferenza svizra da l'agid sozial

By election of a new ICSW Europe Board at ICSW Europe General Assembly taking place in Malaga, Spain, on 2 December 2022, it was decided by the Board to send out a short questionnaire in a Letter from the President (a new ICSW Europe President *Max Rubisch*) to all ICSW Europe members to find out about the members':

- most important issues in their organisation at the moment;
- priorities of their organisation in the years 2023 to 2026;
- their expectations in this context from ICSW Europe.

Swiss conference for social welfare (SKOS) reacted to this call. SKOS's reaction can serve as an inspiration for other members too, thus we state down the organisation's response. This feedback is an important for the Board to understand how to improve the work and communication towards ICSW Europe members for their satisfaction.

Editor of ICSW Europe Newsletter

SKOS's reaction:

Most important issues in SKOS organisation at the moment:

- Our annual conference will be held in March on the theme of social inclusion;
- Legal advice on the orientation of asylum social assistance (which is a new mandate) and standard social assistance (what we have been doing for a long time);
- Monitor the impact of inflation on basic needs; inflation compensation;
- Promoting the education of people on social assistance;
- Development of a drop load calculation tool (Caseload Converter).

Priorities of your organisation in the years 2023 to 2026:

⇒ Please find [here](#) [in German only] the SKOS 2025 strategie. As an association, it is primarily important to offer members an attractive service (legal advice, up-to-date information, tools for practice, basic knowledge and positions, events and further training). To mention a few points of content:

- Proposals Realignment of labour market strategy;
- Weiterbildungsoffensive: Further training offensive for social assistance recipients;
- Promotion of supplementary family benefits (Familienergänzungsleistungen) and suitable measures for social and for the social and economic integration of and economic integration of single parents, which also includes such as supplementary childcare;
- Facilitate access to social assistance – minimise non-receipt;
- Analysis of the Connections between climate and social policy;

- Promoting the use of digital services in social assistance;
- Promote sustainable and fair financing of social assistance;
- Revision of SKOS guidelines;
- SKOS guidelines monitoring;
- Review of the adjustment of basic needs.

Your expectations in this context from ICSW Europe:

- Knowledge exchange, ideas and inspiration.

Andrea Beeler, SKOS Switzerland

Our input on social inclusion focused on inequalities faced by groups of older people experiencing multiple discrimination and marginalization as well as on age limits in policy and law that impede full participation in society.

In our contribution on normative content, we made proposals on measures and special considerations that need to be undertaken by states to protect and fulfill the rights to economic security and participation in old age.

[Read our positions](#) on the OEWG13 website.

AGE participation in #AgeWithRights campaign

From 27th February to 5th March, the [Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People](#) launched its [Global Rally](#) to call for better protection of the rights of older people. The objective of this campaign was to mobilise older people's human rights defenders around the world and call on governments to take action ahead of the upcoming OEWG13.

As a member of the Global Alliance, we participated in this campaign, bringing the voices of some of our members on social media and arguing in favour of a UN Convention for the rights of older people.

More specifically, we have shown how the UN Convention would help to fill the gaps in existing legislation and better protect the human rights of older people in practice. In all areas of daily life, ageism and age discrimination hinder the implementation of existing rights, with negative consequences for each of us in old age and for society as a whole.

Using the hashtag: [#AgeWithRights](#), to follow the campaign on Twitter or Facebook.

AGE will follow closely the sessions of the OEWG13 and we will report back to members in an internal debrief on the 18th April. In case you want to learn more about this meeting, you may contact Nena Georgantzi: nena.georgantzi@age-platform.eu.

More information

[Discover what would be the added-value of a UN convention](#)



Strengthening older people's rights: AGE contribution at United Nations' level

#AgeWithRights

Ahead of the [13th Session of the United Nations' Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing](#) (OEWG13), AGE contributed to the call for written submissions and contributed to the global #AgeWithRights Campaign.

AGE written contributions for OEWG13

We organized webinars with members to make the voice of older people heard in the Chair's call for input. Based on our members' experiences and views, we contributed to the call on the two new focus areas, on the "[Right to Health and Access to Health Services](#)" and "[Social Inclusion](#)". We also proposed normative content for the development of a new convention as it relates to "[Economic Security](#)" and the "[Contribution of Older Persons to Sustainable Development](#)."

In our answer on the right to health, we highlighted gaps in public health care systems and how the absence of a comprehensive legal framework against age discrimination makes it difficult to address ageism in health care settings.

[Learn about the UN Open-Ended Working Group and how NGOs can get involved](#)

[#AgeWithRights campaign](#)

(source: Age Platform Europe. Strengthening older people's rights: AGE contribution at United Nations' level. 13 March 2023. [online]. [cit 2023-4-1]. Available at: <<https://www.age-platform.eu/policy-work/news/strengthening-older-people%E2%80%99s-rights-age-contribution-united-nations%E2%80%99-level>>)

European Parliament



Minimum Income Schemes: Increasing support, accessibility and inclusion

MEPs want to address the current cost of living crisis with a new law to modernise and strengthen national minimum income schemes in EU countries.

On [15 March], plenary adopted a resolution noting that an EU directive on an adequate minimum income would make minimum income schemes more accessible and effective. It would also ensure that people currently absent from the labour market are integrated into it.

EU countries should regularly evaluate their national schemes and update them if needed, ensuring an adequate level of support that reflects the national at-risk-of-poverty ([AROE](#)) threshold, to establish a social safety net guaranteeing a minimum standard of living.

MEPs also want to raise the awareness of these schemes and make them more accessible, in particular for disadvantaged groups such as homeless

people. They propose measures to address widespread issues in EU countries such as the lack of take-up of these schemes and the digital divide.

The text was adopted with 336 votes in favour, 174 against and 121 abstentions.

Background

On 28 September 2022, the European Commission proposed a [Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion](#). It sets out how EU countries can modernise their minimum income schemes to make them more effective and to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU.

(source: News European Parliament. 15-03-2023. [online]. [cit 2023-4-7]. Available at: <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230310IPR77232/minimum-income-schemes-increasing-support-accessibility-and-inclusion>>)

For more information about Minimum income, see please European Commission position of 28 September 2022: "[Minimum income: more effective support needed to fight poverty and promote employment](#)".

European Anti Poverty Network

Minimum Income Council Recommendation: Not Enough To Fight Poverty



EAPN position paper

Minimum Income Schemes (MIS) are an essential, integral part of **universal social protection schemes** and a comprehensive, rights-based, person-centred **active inclusion approach** that ensures

adequate income. They are crucial in **multidimensional integrated anti-poverty strategies** both at the national and EU levels.

They help to:

1. Guarantee a **minimum standard of living** and a **decent life** for all;
2. Enable people to fully **participate in society**.

Even though in 2023, all EU Member States have minimum income schemes in place, they vary significantly across countries in terms of adequacy and accessibility, to the point that **no European minimum income scheme matches the actual needs of beneficiaries**, our members report. They fail to lift millions of people above the poverty line and leave the individuals concerned **stigmatised, isolated and trapped in a cycle of poverty and social exclusion**.

Council Recommendation Not Enough

EAPN welcomes the Council Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Income ensuring active inclusion, formally adopted as A-item at the Council of the European Union on **30 January 2023**, as a step forward in implementing principle 14 of the European Pillar of Social Rights. However, we warn that a Recommendation remains entirely voluntary in its application by EU Member States. EU soft law has not allowed sufficient and sustainable progress on poverty reduction. For EAPN, the only way to ensure an adequate income for all across the EU is a **Framework Directive on Minimum Income** with a common set of such minimum requirements and provisions. These should include coverage, accessibility, adequacy, enabling character and regular updates of amounts.

In particular, EAPN regrets:

- The lack of an explicit universal rights-based approach to adequate minimum income, which overcomes discrimination and unequal access and leaves no one behind.
- That Member States are recommended to regularly review and, whenever relevant, adjust the level of minimum income in order to maintain the adequacy of income support.
- The lack of a common EU-wide framework and methodology on reference budgets.
- The lack of concrete sustainability measures/best practices on the financing of MIS.

- That access to minimum income is based on proportionate length of legal residence, thereby potentially excluding individuals with temporary residence, refugees and undocumented migrants.
- That the collection of disaggregated data was only requested on the grounds of sex, age and disability.
- That there are no concrete measures to overcome structural discriminatory and biased approaches and non-take-up by vulnerable groups such as Roma, refugees, women, racialised minorities, and undocumented migrants.
- That it does not specify the age from which adequate minimum income should be available.
- That the responsibility for the triennial reporting moved from Member States to the European Commission and that the participation of minimum income recipients was not included in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages.
- That there is little mention of the need for coordination and integration of minimum income support and social services provision.

Urgent Call: EU Framework Directive

We reiterate our urgent call for a binding EU Framework Directive on Adequate Minimum, which must be designed with meaningful participation of civil society organisations and people experiencing poverty and take into consideration the above recommendations. We count on all EU Member States to guarantee principle 14 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, that is, the right to minimum income, for everybody, throughout their lives, that is adequate, accessible, and enabling, underpinned by social rights and a human-rights approach.

For more information or for any question on content, please contact our EAPN Policy Officer: [Sheila Gois Habib](#).

[Read a full position paper](#)

(source: EAPN. Position paper. [online]. [cit 2023-4-7]. Available at: <<https://mailchi.mp/3f5454167243/minimum-income-council-recommendation-not-enough-to-fight-poverty-5803631?e=2baab4c54d>>)

Council of Europe



The Hague Civil Society Declaration on Council of Europe Reform

The Civil Society Summit on the Council of Europe (CoE) took place in The Hague on 28 February and 1 March 2023 ahead of the Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government to be held on 16–17 May 2023 in Reykjavík. The Summit was convened and organised by the Campaign to Uphold Rights in Europe (CURE) and the Conference of International NGOs of the Council of Europe (CINGO).

The Summit gathered 105 participants from 27 CoE member states and 2 non-member states in The Hague, and 57 online participants from 20 CoE member states and 1 non-member state. People active in 38 European networks on human rights, democracy and civic participation were present. The event included two panel discussions, several plenary sessions and 12 thematic working groups, focusing on particular areas of concern. The Summit participants elaborated three outcome documents – The Hague Civil Society Declaration on Council of Europe Reform, a statement on the situation in Turkey and a statement on the role of the Council of Europe in ensuring accountability for international crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine. The outcome documents contain problem analysis and specific recommendations to the CoE and its member states. The outcome documents were presented and handed over to the Council of Europe leadership at the concluding session of the Summit.

Civil society organisations are encouraged to endorse The Hague Declaration until the start of the CoE Summit in Reykjavík by writing to the organisers at css@cure-campaign.org.

A list of endorsements will be made available at <https://cure-campaign.org/css>.

A full document – **The Hague Civil Society Declaration on Council of Europe Reform** – is available [here](https://rm.coe.int/the-hague-civil-society-declaration-on-council-of-europe-reform/1680aaaac2).

(source: Council of Europe: *The Hague Civil Society Declaration on Council of Europe Reform* . [online]. [cit 2023-4-5]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/the-hague-civil-society-declaration-on-council-of-europe-reform/1680aaaac2>>)

European Commission



Report on the Future of the Welfare State in the EU published



Last year the European Commission convened an expert group to discuss the challenges and future models for social protection systems in the EU. This high-level group of 11 experts from the field presented their final report **“The future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU”** on 7 February.

The High-Level Group report analyses megatrends that are affecting the welfare states such as demographic changes and the impact of technology and digitalisation. It develops policy options through a life-course perspective starting with the early and family life towards the working life and the transition

to retirement. The report concludes in recommendations for policy makers how to modernise and adapt welfare states. You can find the report of the expert group [here](#).

In light of the High-Level Group report Eurodiaconia and the European Social Network (ESN) published joint proposals on the future of social services as a fundamental part of social protection systems in the EU. It refers to the main trends challenges, and opportunities in social service provision in regard of the implementation of EU legal and policy frameworks, financing, and challenges intrinsic to the sector, such as workforce related matters, digitalisation related trends and the growing complexity and evolution of the needs of people using social services. You can find the recommendation [here](#).

[The Final report for downloading here.](#)

Kathleen Wabrowetz, ICSW Europe Board

(source – picture: European Commission. Report of the High-Level Group on the future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU. [online]. [cit 2023-4-3]. Available at: <<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventId=2057&furtherEvents=yes>>)

Conferences/Expert Meetings

2023 GLOBAL STUDENT CONFERENCE

Respecting Diversity Through Joint Social Action: Reframing Disability as Ability

Sunday, April 2, 2023
Fordham University Gabelli School of Business
Room G76 A/B
140 W 62nd St, New York, NY

Participants were encouraged to question the status quo, collaborate in community-driven advocacy, challenge dysfunctional systems, and reframe disability from pathology to strength.

Sponsors:



[Conference speakers](#)



39th ANNUAL SOCIAL WORK DAY at the UNITED NATIONS

Creating a More Inclusive World: Overcoming Barriers to EnABLE Environments

Monday, April 3, 2023
ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations, NY City

Working towards eliminating social barriers and promoting the empowerment of persons with disabilities figures prominently on social workers' agendas worldwide. An inaccessible or inadequate physical environment often undermines the ability of persons with disabilities to participate meaningfully in society, becoming an obvious impediment and contributing to social discrimination and exclusion.

Identifying the multitude of visible and invisible barriers that limit access by people with disabilities to education, employment, health care, housing, and other social services is a first step on the road toward creating a more inclusive world, a "society for all". Disability is a human rights and development issue. Social workers are crucial stakeholders in building awareness of these issues and exploring ways to make social institutions more responsive to human needs, promoting the integration of persons with all abilities in society to the fullest extent.

The 2023 Social Work Day at the United Nations in New York aimed to further our understanding of disability issues in human rights and developmental contexts. It sought to highlight a full spectrum of this discourse, tackling theoretical aspects and down-to-earth issues encountered by practitioners and policymakers. The presentations on promoting enabling environments identified ways in which socially discriminatory barriers can be reduced or eliminated.

www.monmouth.edu/swday

Social Intervention Practices

Theme that structures this dossier aims to question the way in which social intervention professionals implement the principles of equality that run through social policies. These policies are often perceived and analysed as mechanisms that impose themselves on the actors, thereby erasing the complex dimensions of the activity. Approaches to street level bureaucracy (*Lipsky, 1980*), i.e. analyses of the concrete application of social policies by those on the front line and in contact with the public, have explored the 'two lives' of a law: its formal definition, on the one hand, and the various definitions imparted to it by the actors on the ground, on the other. How are decisions shaped by the intermediaries in charge of applying them? To what extent is the interpretation of legal frameworks the product of complex interactions within organisations? This implies taking into account the differences between prescribed work and real work, in order to understand the gaps between egalitarian prescriptions and work situations. In other words, we need to understand the arrangements that social workers make to implement these egalitarian policies. How do they participate in promoting or diverting egalitarian principles, and thus in (re) producing, or not, the gender system?

G. Perrier's article, entitled "[Gender and employment policies in France and Germany](#)", contributes to this reflection by analysing social intervention practices from a gender perspective through the implementation of equality policies for the long-term unemployed in these two European countries. The cognitive analysis, which focuses on female professionals, seeks to identify the legitimacy that they see in employment equality policies. It reveals the gap between the objective of gender equality, institutionalised in the public employment services in France and Germany in the 2000s, and its effectiveness. The survey of social work professionals in Berlin and Seine-Saint-Denis shows the difficulty of reconciling the normative orientations aimed at equality with the frames of reference of the fight against exclusion. Equality, drowned out by a sum of

problems faced by very precarious groups, does not seem to be a priority for the professionals: "gender [is thus] dissolved in the fight against exclusion". Normative and cognitive constraints make it difficult for professionals to take gender issues into account, as they construct their practices based on their perceptions and have limited tools to implement these equality policies. In so doing, *G. Perrier's* contribution enriches studies on "cognitive approaches to public action", which cannot ignore the gendered dimension, in particular "by focusing on the knowledge of female workers concerning the way in which gender structures their professional sector and on the ways in which they think and say (in)equality".

The activity of social workers can also be understood as reflexive and analytical work, which is constructed at the articulation of different logics and levels of action (institutional, organisational and individual). Understanding the social intervention in the process of being carried out then comes down to linking these different levels of action so as not to reduce the exercise of social work to an interpersonal relationship between a practitioner and an individual, who is, moreover, a neutral male. To avoid this pitfall, which contributes to the psychologisation of social action (*Bresson, 2012*), it is important to identify the complexity of social intervention and to identify the social and professional, formal and informal spaces in which this reflexivity takes place.

The analysis proposed by *M. Derue, Y. Jeanselme* and *M. Lazzaroni* is precisely in this perspective. In their article entitled "[L'intervention sociale auprès de mères seules en structure d'hébergement d'urgence. Pratiques et représentations](#)" [in French], the authors return to the institution in which they work, the Samusocial, as researchers and social action professionals. Based on a qualitative survey carried out in 2021 in the emergency shelters managed by the Samusocial de Paris, the authors examine the specificities of social intervention for single mothers and their children. Their contribution highlights the practices of social workers and the paradoxes that underlie them. Social policies aimed at single-parent families, a category with blurred contours, are, like many other sectors of social policy today, crossed by norms of autonomy and emancipation. Rather than redrawing the boundaries of gender and interrogating gender relations, these frames of reference come up against stereotypical norms and socially situated

injunctions in terms of gender, class and culture. However, this analysis allows us to measure how certain professionals and structures in social action are currently attempting to question their practices in a reflexive manner, in particular by taking up work on gender. The authors point out that "the distancing and questioning observed at the individual level also echo the practices of Samusocial de Paris itself, which has been conducting institutional work to distance itself from gender stereotypes and norms for several years", of which this article is one of the results.

summary by: **Philippe Steck**, French CFADS

Advocating for universal social security: how to win hearts and minds

Stephen Kidd-Gunnel Axelsson Nycander-Holly Seglah



Act Church of Sweden is committed to promoting everybody's right to social security. We see this as a key strategy in fighting poverty and promoting gender equality, resilience and most of the SDGs. Increasingly, we see the importance of social

security as a tool to handle future risks and shocks – whether climate-related or not.

During the last decade, not least after the COVID-19 pandemic, the international consensus that greater investments in social protection are needed in low- and middle-income countries has grown stronger, for many reasons. However, there is still considerable controversy around the question on whether social protection should be based on rights-based and universal social security benefits like child benefits for all children or pensions for all persons above a certain age, or whether the focus should be on poverty-targeted benefits. This debate is technical, but at the same time, deeply political.

In previous reports, Act Church of Sweden and Development Pathways have provided evidence on how poverty-targeted schemes exclude large groups of the intended beneficiaries and why universal benefits, although more costly, are more likely to be sustainably financed.

In this paper we summarise this evidence and go a step further. We discuss how advocacy for universal social security can be carried out in the most effective way: the words and arguments to use and who to approach to win hearts and minds. Words are important. The language we use shapes our thinking, while also shaping the thinking of those with whom we communicate. If for example, we use inclusive words and avoid 'othering' recipients of social security, the case for universality may be received more easily.

We hope that this guidance can be useful for advocates of universal social security in different contexts, whether it be in civil society, governmental, political or international organisations or other spaces. You may agree with some, or all, of the suggestions given in this paper. Or you may not. There may be parts where your own thinking is challenged or even provoked. Above all, we hope that the document stimulates your own thinking.

[**Read the full paper – Advocating for universal social security: how to win hearts and minds**](#)

Useful Links

AGE Platform Europe – Age with Rights Campaign:
[#AgeWithRights campaign](#)

EAPN Poistion Paper on Minimum Income:
<https://www.eapn.eu/minimum-income-council-recommendation-not-enough-to-fight-poverty/>

The Hague Civil Society Declaration on Council of Europe Reform:
<https://rm.coe.int/the-hague-civil-society-declaration-on-council-of-europe-reform/1680aaaac2>

European Commission – *Report of the High-Level Group on the future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU*:
<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/842d8006-c3b3-11ed-a05c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-283143938>

Colophon

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Contributions and comments can be sent to:

ICSW Europe
Gabriela Siantova, Secretary and Editor
E-mail: gabriela.siantova@icsw.org

ICSW European Region:

President: Max Rubisch (Austria)
Treasurer: Jean-Michel Hôte (France)
Board member: Jukka Petteri Haapakoski (Finland)
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Board member: Kathleen Wabrowetz (Germany)



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