

ICSW EUROPE NEWSLETTER

3/2023

(Issued on 4 October 2023)

ISSN 2411-9709

Table of Contents

A Message from the President	2
ICSW Europe 2023 Scientific Seminar and ICSW Europe 2023 GA	3
ICSW Europe Members	4
AGE Platform Europe.....	5
Council of Europe	6
European Commission	7
Conferences/Expert Meetings	11
Publications	9
Useful Links	10
Colophon	10



Autumn at Chiemsee, Bavaria

author of the photo: © Max Rubisch

A Message from the President



I hope this Newsletter finds you well and all of you had a nice summer!

When I asked our member organisations in spring this year about their priority themes in the coming years, on the first place were **"Strategies against Poverty"**.

There is a great concern about increasing inequality and increasing poverty in Europe. The groups most at risk of poverty are Women, Elderly, Migrants, Roma, unemployed persons, young people and children.

The Austrian member organisation "Österreichisches Komitee für Soziale Arbeit" organised a Seminar on 30 June on the issue of Child Poverty. *Irina Volf* from the "Institut für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik" in Frankfurt, Germany, presented their study on **"Effects of poverty of children and young people in the life course"**. The central thesis is that poverty is not only a lack of money but living conditions that lead to many restrictions and disadvantages. The method of this study was the "principle of circumstances". It can be seen in four dimensions:

- the material situation (food, housing, clothes);
- the cultural situation (formal and informal education, cultural participation);
- the social situation (relationships, social resources, social competencies);
- the health status (physical and mental health, alimentation, sport).

It was a Long-term-Study carried out from 1997 until 2021 where the development of children from the age of 6 until the age of 28 was evaluated. The pieces of information about the life circumstances were connected with the income of the families and were observed during 24 years.

Poverty during childhood has far-reaching consequences for the whole life cycle: poorer educational achievements, poorer cultural activities, poorer social relationships and lower health status.

Concerning the health status, the problems in the long run are cumulating and lead to psychic crises, depressions, abuse of alcohol and drugs. The majority of persons with poverty experience also doesn't know much about politics and has the impression that politicians don't care about their interests.

But there are also elements of hope in the study: half of the children succeeded in escaping from poverty until the age of 25. Poor people also have resources and competencies – it is important to empowering them and strengthening their resilience. What they need especially are stable relationships, role models and persons of trust.

Generally, poverty is not self-inflicted, but is a structural problem in society. It is caused by complex political decisions and it is a threat to our democracy.

Having in mind the reactions of our member organisations, the Board of ICSW Europe has decided to organise a Scientific Seminar on **"Poverty of Children and Families"** together with our annual General Assembly. The Seminar will be organised together with the Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius and will take place on **30 November and 1 December 2023 in Vilnius, Lithuania**. Two keynote speakers will present the issue in an European context (from Vilnius University and from the European Anti-Poverty Network in Brussels). The following contributions will focus on the situation in different European countries – in the North, the Center and the South of Europe. We will formulate conclusions and demands to the politicians and I hope that we can provide a good input to ICSW's contribution to the forthcoming UN World Social Summit in 2025.

It will be a hybrid seminar – participation will be possible online or in person. **I cordially invite our member organisations and I hope to see many of you in Vilnius.**

Max Rubisch, President of ICSW Europe

ICSW Europe 2023 Scientific Seminar – “Poverty of Children and Families”

ICSW Europe 2023 General Assembly (GA)

Two important ICSW Europe events are planned at the end of 2023 year:

- ICSW Europe 2023 Scientific Seminar
- ICSW Europe 2023 General Assembly (GA)

The events will take place on:

ICSW Europe 2023 Scientific Seminar

30 November 2023 (from 2:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.) and
1 December 2023 (from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)

ICSW Europe 2023 General Assembly (GA)

1 December 2023 (half a day, afternoon)

Venue:

LITHUANIA

Vilnius

Mykolas Romeris university

Training LAB

Address: Didlaukio str. 55, Vilnius, Lithuania

<https://www.mruni.eu/en/research/mru-laboratories/>

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

A Preliminary program for the Seminar on 30 November 2023 (a program can be modified)

Thursday, 30 November

14:00

Opening of the Seminar

Odeta Merfeldaitė (Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Studies, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius)

Max Rubisch (President of ICSW Europe)

14:15

Dr. Jekaterina Navicke (Associate Professor at Social Policy Department, Vilnius University):

“A Poverty-Free Childhood Guaranteed? Situation and Developments in Lithuania within the EU-context”

15:00

Sheila Gois Habib (European Anti-Poverty Network, Brussels):

“A Future beyond Austerity: Breaking the Chains of Child Poverty”

15:45

Coffee break

16:15

Kathleen Wabrowetz (Deutscher Verein, Germany and ICSW Europe Board):

“Basic security for children in Germany” (title tbc)

17:00

Discussion with the audience

17:30

Closing of the day

Friday, 1 December

9:30

Judith Ranftler (Volkshilfe, Austria)

“Studies about Child Poverty in Austria” (title tbc)

10:15

Anna Maria Isola (Turku University, Finland)

“Child Poverty in the Finnish context” (title tbc)

11:00

Coffee break

11:30


possible other presentations (tbc)

12:15

Discussion

13:00

Closing of the Seminar

 **The program of the Seminar is still in progress and can be modified.**

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 svizra da l'agid social

Schweizerische Konferenz für Sozialhilfe (SKOS) published last week a basic paper on the rising costs of housing in Switzerland. In it, [SKOS] makes recommendations on how social assistance can respond to rising housing costs. [SKOS] also makes social and housing policy proposals. The paper is available in German and French: <https://skos.ch/aktuell/artikel/wohnen-empfehlungen-der-skos>.

Visual Communication Aids

Counselling sessions in social services can be challenging for all parties involved, because, among other things, complex processes around financial support need to be explained or understood. Language barriers can add to the difficulty of explaining.

Based on interview results from the University of Applied Sciences for Social Work FHNW, students of the Master "Visual Communication and Iconic Research" at the University of Applied Sciences for Design and Arts Basel FHNW have designed visual materials to support communication in the project Durchblick. The materials were tested in their application and revised. In May 2023, the team received an award from the International Institute for Information Design.

The materials offer structuring aids, contain step-by-step instructions, facilitate the handling of administrative documents and can be used as reminders or visualisation for explanations. The set includes conversation cards, life areas cards, stickers with life areas and instructions, and visualised procedures for doctor and health insurance statements.

The visual communication aids have been available in the SKOS webshop since September 2023.



[The cards depicting a coloured character in various emotional states.]

For further information see:

Website SKOS (in German):

<https://skos.ch/dienstleistungen/hilfsmittel/visuelle-kommunikation>

ZESO-Article (in German):

<https://www.zeso-magazin.skos.ch/de/artikel/visuelle-kommunikationsmittel-fuer-beratungsgespraeche-die-ergebnisse>

(source: Schweizerische Konferenz für Sozialhilfe SKOS; [online]. [cit 2023-9-12]. Available at: <<https://skos.ch/dienstleistungen/hilfsmittel/visuelle-kommunikation>>)

A comprehensive approach to mental health: the plan of the European Commission is out

On 7 June 2023 the European Commission released its plan for a [comprehensive approach to mental health](#) in Europe. The plan includes 20 flagship initiatives and EU funding (€1.23 billion) to support Member States in "putting people and their mental health first".

The pandemic and the successive crises experienced over the past years have undermined the mental health of the population throughout Europe. With its new initiative, the European Commission wants to make a step to put mental health on par with physical health and to ensure a new, cross sectoral approach to mental health issues.

This plan follows three guiding principles:

- adequate and effective prevention;
- access to high quality and affordable mental healthcare and treatment;
- reintegration into society after recovery.

The initiative of the European Commission plans efforts to:

- Promote good mental health through **prevention and early detection**, including through a European depression and suicide prevention initiative, a European Code for Mental Health and strengthened research on brain health.
- Invest in training and capacity building that reinforces mental health across policies and improves access to treatment and care.
- **Ensure good mental health at work** by raising awareness and improving prevention. This will be done for instance through EU-wide awareness raising campaigns by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) and a possible future EU initiative on psycho-social risks at work.
- Protect children and the young during their most vulnerable and formative years, in a context of increasing pressures and challenges. Measures

include a child and youth mental health network, a prevention toolkit for children addressing the key health determinants of mental and physical health, and better protection online and on social media.

- **Address vulnerable groups** by providing targeted support to those most in need, **such as older people**, people in difficult economic or social situations and migrant/refugee populations.
- Lead by example at the international level by raising awareness and providing quality mental health support in humanitarian emergencies.

The initiative of the European Commission recognises the importance of addressing inequalities and discrimination through intersectionality and tailored support, particularly for people in vulnerable situations: children and young people, women, older people, migrants, LGBTQ+, people experiencing homelessness, Roma communities, people in rural areas. It is also fully aligned with the Disability Rights Strategy and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, showing the strong commitment of the EU to human rights.

AGE contribution

The release of this plan follows a consultation launched by the European Commission at the beginning of this year. AGE replied to this consultation, insisting on the importance of a rights-based and life-course approach to mental health and its integration across all EU policies ([read on our contribution here](#)). We will continue to analyse this plan and to work in close cooperation with European Commissions' services and leading organisations such as Mental Health Europe.

Read also:

- [AGE contribution on an EU comprehensive approach to mental health](#)
- [Article of Mental Health Europe](#)
- [Article on ageism and impact on older people's mental health](#) (from the UK Centre on Ageing Better)
- our Special Briefing '[Good mental health is essential for well-being in old age](#)'

(source: AGE Platform Europe: A comprehensive approach to mental health... [online]. [cit 2023-9-12]. Available at: <<https://www.age-platform.eu/policy-work/news/>>)

Council of Europe



25th Anniversary of the collective complaints procedure



The [collective complaints procedure](https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/25th-anniversary-of-the-collective-complaints-procedure) is a human rights protection system for social and economic rights which complements the judicial protection provided under the [European Convention on Human Rights](https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/25th-anniversary-of-the-collective-complaints-procedure) for civil and political rights.

The collective complaints procedure is a unique form of collective legal action in the human rights protection system, reflecting a systemic approach in addressing social rights problems. This procedure encourages and provides guidance to states to resolve structural problems and shortcomings that prevent general and effective enjoyment of social rights by all the people living within their jurisdiction.

To mark the **25th anniversary** of the entry into force of the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter Providing for a System of Collective Complaints (ETS No. 158) in 1998, the **Social Rights Department of the Council of Europe** hosted an event to discuss effective social rights protection in the European space.

On celebrating the 25th anniversary of the entry into effect of the collective complaints procedure, this event represents an unambiguous call on the Council

of Europe members states that have not yet accepted it, to follow the example of the first 16 states that did so. Such acceptance will contribute to a more coherent legal space for the implementation of social rights in Europe.

25 years in pursuit of human rights and social justice took place on **6 July 2023**. The **programme** of the event can be read here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/25th-anniversary-of-the-collective-complaints-procedure>

Recording of the event

(source: Council of Europe, Social Rights. 25th Anniversary of the collective complaints procedure. [online]. [cit 2023-9-15]. Available at: <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/25th-anniversary-of-the-collective-complaints-procedure>>)

October Session of the Conference of INGOs



The forthcoming **Autumn Session of the Conference of INGOs** is taking place on **9-11 October 2023** in a **hybrid format**. English/French interpretation will be provided during the GA.

The autumn session will be dedicated to both reporting on and discussing the most recent events after the Summit of Heads of States and the follow up process, especially concerning the Civil Society and the Council of Europe. At the same time, [there will be given] a lot of space to the committees – not in a formal reporting session, which will take place at the end of term in April next year, but in an open and interactive way.

The networking session will be dedicated to the committees, giving them room to present their work,

to exchange experiences but most importantly to discuss future moves in the upcoming next three-annual period. The round table organised by [the] committee “NGOs as advocates for gender equality and women’s rights” is dedicated to the same goal: as a platform to think about equality as a general task for the whole Conference and all of us. And there are already initiatives starting to think about new ideas for committees in the future, which would like to present themselves at the networking event.

The **draft Agenda** is available [here](#).

The updates will be available on CINGO website, kindly consult the [Session's page](#) regularly for updates.

(source: NGO-Unit. E-mail on 8 September 2023. <NGO-Unit@coe.int>)

European Commission



Access to essential services: key challenges for the most vulnerable – report

According to the Commission's report, people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU have difficulties in accessing essential services such as energy, transport and digital communication. The report, the first-ever on this issue, sheds light on the structural challenges these groups face in using such services and underlines the need to ensure that the society-wide green and digital twin transition is fair and inclusive.

According to Principle 20 of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), everyone has the right to easy-to-use and affordable key services, including **water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications**.

However, the new EU report shows that people at risk of poverty or social exclusion face **significant challenges in this respect**. Moreover, the findings highlight that **disadvantaged groups**, such as the Roma community or the homeless, are more likely to encounter difficulties, particularly in relation to energy and transport.



Based on the latest available data on income and living conditions in the EU ([EU SILC](#)), the report offers a deeper understanding of the potential impact of the current cost-of-living and energy crises on accessing essential services.

It adds valuable insights to ongoing discussions related to definition of “energy poverty” and “transport poverty,” helping to shape action at EU level. And it shows that easing access to essential services for groups facing barriers can help the EU achieve its target of [lifting at least 15 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2030](#).

[The full report can be read here.](#)

(source: European Commission: Access to essential services: key challenges for the most vulnerable – report. [online]. [cit 2023-9-16]. Available at: <<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10595>>)

Conferences/Expert Meetings



Over the Line: Social Platform's Annual conference 25 October 2023

As the countdown begins until the next EU elections in 2024, now is the time to make our voices heard on the change we want to see in the next mandate.

With an estimated 1 in 5 people at risk of poverty in the EU, Social Platform and its members are calling for the next European Parliament and European Commission to show ambition and commitment to tackle this pressing problem through the strengthening of minimum income schemes across the EU.

Gathering together decision-makers, trade union representatives, community activists and Social Platform's diverse network of member organisations, this event puts the spotlight on adequate minimum income schemes as a crucial solution for addressing poverty in Europe. Our aim is to secure and renew the commitment of European political parties to champion adequate, accessible minimum income schemes in their election campaigns and manifestos.

AGENDA

Insights & findings from civil society (in-person only)

- 09:30-12:30
- Venue: Info Hub, Esplanade Solidarność 1980
- Participants will engage on the issue of minimum income and poverty in the EU, with civil society representatives presenting analysis, report findings and insights from the ground.

Political panel (in-person or online live stream)

- 15:00-17:30
- Hosted by: MEP Estrella Dura Ferrandis, S&D and MEP Sara Matthieu, Greens/EFA
- Venue: European Parliament, ASP 3H1
- High-level speakers will discuss the current state of minimum income schemes in the EU and the call for and EU framework directive on adequate minimum income.

For more information on the agenda, please see the website:

<https://www.socialplatform.org/events/annual-conference-over-the-poverty-line/>

NB: Limited in-person spaces are available. Register soon to reserve your spot.

(source: Social Platform: Over the Line: Social Platform's Annual conference. [online]. [cit 2023-10-2]. Available at: <<https://www.socialplatform.org/events/annual-conference-over-the-poverty-line/>>)

Social Learning Platform on the Social Economy 10 October 2023



Together with CECOP – ENSIE and RREUSE [Social Platform] will be hosting a Social Learning Platform on the Social Economy. The meeting aims at finding synergies, look at the political

discussions and to get acquainted with some of the societal issues the enterprises of the social economy represent.

Date: 10 October

Time: 10:00-11:30

Place: Online

Register [here](#) and see the agenda [here](#)

(source: Social Platform: Social Learning Platform on the Social Economy. E-mail on 2 October 2023. <platform@socialplatform.org>)

**Capacity Building Session on the European Semester
Process**
6 December 2023



“We are happy to invite all Social Platform members to join this capacity building session co-organised with EAPN Europe, ENSIE and ERGO Network as well as their respective members EAPN France, Skoopi (Sweden) and Integro Association (Bulgaria).

We welcome the wide participation of both Social Platform members and your own members regardless of current levels of engagement in the Semester: from those who would like to start getting engaged, to those who have been engaging but would like to learn more to those who are doing extensive work on the European Semester”.

Date: 6 December

Time: 14:00-16:30

Place: Online

Registration: Via [Microsoft forms](#)

(source: Social Platform: Capacity Building Session on the European Semester Process. E-mail on 2 October 2023. <platform@socialplatform.org>)

Publications

Study on the long-term care systems in the Western Balkans



AGE member [the Red Cross of Serbia](#) is coordinating the project “[Strengthening the resilience of older persons and persons with disabilities during COVID-19 and future disasters](#)” supported by the

European Union, Austrian Development Agency and the Austrian Red Cross. As part of this project, a study on the long-term care systems in the Western Balkans was conducted at the end of 2020, which connected civil society partners from Serbia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Kosovo, as well as large civil society networks representing older persons and persons with disabilities at the level of the European Union.

The aim of this study is to provide insight into the facts that will enable the formulation of recommendations and measures for public policies that will:

- Increase the capacity of service providers and civil society organisations (CSOs);
- improve public policies;
- increase financial benefits to enhance long-term care for older persons and persons with disabilities under normal circumstances, and especially in case of emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study report examines the situation regarding long term care in the Western Balkans, including a comparative overview that shows similarities and differences to enable mutual learning and search for solutions. The report defines the long-term care in the Western Balkans, looks at long-term regulation, management and financing in those regions, as well as at the formal care and the informal care, the latter remaining the dominant form of long-term care.

This study is based on the data collected in several phases and by applying several methods, including desk research, qualitative research and quantitative research.

In addition to the regional study, local studies were developed for each project site within the initiative.

Download the study 'Long-term care of older persons and persons with disabilities in the Western Balkans':

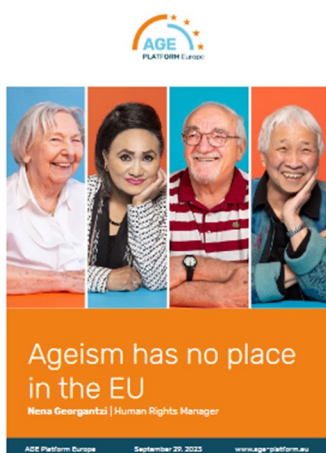
[Long version of the report](#) (that includes a foreword by AGE Platform Europe)

Shorter version

(source: AGE Platform Europe: Study on the long-term care systems in the Western Balkans. [online]. [cit 2023-9-17]. Available at: <<https://www.age-platform.eu/age-member-news/study-long-term-care-systems-western-balkans>>)



Ageism has no place in the EU



On the occasion of International Day of Older Persons, AGE Platform has published a policy statement on the need for renewed political commitment to delivering equal rights at all ages.

[Read it here](#)

(source: AGE Platform Europe: Ageism has no place in the EU. [online]. [cit 2023-10-2]. Available at: <https://towardsanagefriendlyep.files.wordpress.com/2023/09/layout_idop2023_age.pdf>)

Useful Links

AGE Platform Europe:

<https://www.age-platform.eu/>

Council of Europe – The collective complaints procedure:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/collective-complaints-procedure1>

Council of Europe – Autumn Session Draft Agenda:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/october-2023>

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: gabriela.siantova@icsw.org

ICSW European Region:

President: Max Rubisch (Austria)

Treasurer: Jean-Michel Hôte (France)

Board member: Jukka Petteri Haapakoski (Finland)

Board member: Alina Petrauskienė (Lithuania)

Board member: Kathleen Wabrowetz (Germany)



Global Office:

International Council on Social Welfare

Website: <http://www.icsw.org>

E-mail: icsw@icsw.org