

## ICSW EUROPE NEWSLETTER

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Vilnius Christmas market, December 2023

*author of the photo: © Max Rubisch*

## A Message from the President



**Dear readers of our Newsletter,**

I hope you had a good start into the New Year!

ICSW Europe concluded the old year with a Seminar and our annual General Assembly. On 30 November and 1 December 2023, together with the Mykolas Romeris University Vilnius, we held a scientific Seminar on **“Poverty of Children and Families”** in Vilnius.

I think our Seminar was really a success: on the one hand we had excellent speakers from European organisations (European Anti-Poverty Network and Eurochild), on the other hand we heard a lot about the problem of poverty in different countries (Lithuania, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Finland and Spain). It was also a good mixture between academic speakers with great experience in this area and representatives from NGO's fighting every day against poverty in practice.

I was very happy to see that among the participants were also young students from different continents taking part in the EU Program “Erasmus Mundus” at Mykolas Romeris University. The last part of the Seminar was a discussion between all participants and as a conclusion of the presentations the participants formulated political demands.

For me the most important results were the following:

The presentations showed that even in a rich continent as Europe many persons are at risk of poverty and exclusion. The COVID pandemics, the war in Ukraine and the raising costs of energy, food and housing have worsened the situation in the last years. Poverty is not an individual problem but a structural problem in society. For some people the access to essential services and fundamental rights is not guaranteed – poor people and especially poor

children suffer from discrimination and stigmatization. The European Welfare States are inadequately funded – austerity measures and the liberalization of essential services have led to growing poverty. Even in countries with a long tradition as welfare states – like Sweden and Finland – poverty is a growing problem. The groups most hit by poverty are children, women, single-parent families, ethnic minorities and migrants.

For detailed information about the Seminar please read the Summary and the Presentations of the speakers in this Newsletter.

Poverty of Children and Families is not only a human and a social problem, it has also large economic consequences. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) calculates the follow-up costs with 3.6% of the Gross Domestic Product. Child Poverty is also an issue of sustainable development. In September 2023, ICSW Global adopted the **“Windhoek Declaration”** (see the Newsletter of ICSW Global from September 2023). The issue of this document is advancing the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. It concludes on ten action points – one of them addresses children in a very clear statement:

***“Put children at the center: sustainable development means taking care of the needs of today's people without compromising the possibilities of future generations to cater for their needs. The first future generation is already here: today's children. All policies should thus be evaluated by a “child impact assessment”.***

The United Nations are planning a World Summit for Social Development in 2025. I hope that the outcome of our Seminar in Vilnius can be a good contribution for this summit.

I wish you all the best for the year 2024!

**Max Rubisch**

President of ICSW Europe

## ICSW Europe Scientific Seminar Opening Remarks



**Sang-Mok Suh**

**ICSW President**

"I would like to congratulate the ICSW Europe and the Lithuanian Committee of ICSW, particularly European Region President *Max Rubisch*, for organizing this conference on "Poverty of Children and Families", for picking the right theme at the right time.

Poverty is always the most urgent and important issue in social welfare but the 3-year painful experience of COVID-19 has aggravated the poverty situation globally. The global supply chain has been seriously hampered due to the disturbance in world trade and global exchanges as a result of this terrible pandemic. The World Bank has reported that the depth of COVID-19 has surpassed that of Great Depression, and the population below the poverty line has increased in the order of 100 million people.

As a result, the progress, the international community has made under the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since year 2000, has virtually been wiped out due to the COVID-19 related economic difficulties.

Furthermore, the international political environment has also deteriorated due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the US-China rivalry in the high-tech industries and the recent tragedy in the Gaza Strip. Many experts of international politics claim that we are now entering the new era of Cold War. Thus, it is an opportune time to develop new strategies to overcome these new challenges, we now face. That's the reason why I feel that the theme of this conference, "Poverty of Children and Families", is very relevant and timely.

Personally, I have the experience of undertaking the first poverty study ever on Korea in 1981. The recommendations of that study were as follows: Firstly, divide the poverty group into the two categories, those able to work and those unable to work, and develop 'the welfare to work program' for the former and provide the basic support programs for the latter; Secondly, develop generous scholarship programs for the students from low-income families so that the poverty does not get inherited to the next generation; Thirdly, formulate effective welfare delivery systems for the public assistance program, where efficiency as well as effectiveness are ensured. Most of the recommendation were adopted by the Korean Government and the outcome was a unique "growth with equity experience in Korea", sometime called "the Han River Miracle".

I am very happy to note that Europe has the European Anti-Poverty Network (so-called EAPN), in independent NGO which monitors the poverty situation, publishes its report under the title of "The European Poverty Watch Report", and develops sensible policies in the field of poverty and social exclusion. I have read its 2022 Report with much interests. I sincerely hope that this conference come up with many refreshing new ideas on this important issue of "Poverty of Children and Families", which will have lasting impacts on the future activities of EU as well as the United Nation.

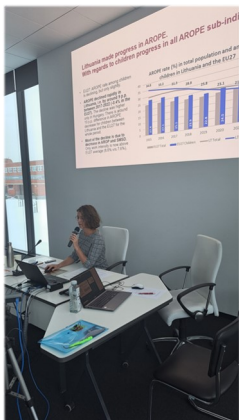
As the Global President of ICSW, I will do my best to explore this issue further in terms of exploring new facts, and develop effective policies and programs to be adopted by national governments and international organizations such as EU and UN. In this regard, I would like to report to you that I am in the process of establishing a new institution, called 'Global Smart Welfare Center', which will organize the training programs and conferences on the subject of 'smart welfare' in close cooperation with ICSW, and disseminate best smart welfare practices in the field to the international community.

I look forward to listening to many exciting presentations and thoughtful discussions in the forthcoming sessions.

Thank you!"

## Abstracts

### ICSW Europe Scientific Seminar



**Jekaterina Navicke**

#### **A Poverty-Free Childhood Guaranteed? Situation and Developments in Lithuania within the EU Context.**

Lithuania is among the countries with the highest at risk of poverty (AROP) rates in the EU.

Nevertheless, within the last five years the AROP rate for children in Lithuania decreased from the above- to below-average level in the total population (by around 8 p.p. between 2017-2022). It is now also below the EU-27 AROP average for children, where the indicator declined by less than 1 p.p. between 2017-2022. During the same period at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate has also declined by around 9 p.p. in Lithuania, while only by 0.4 in the EU. The steep decline in both indicators in Lithuania was due to numerous socio-economic factors, such as rapid minimum and average wage growth and high employment rates, but also due to the introduction of the universal child benefit in 2017, as well as increased coverage and adequacy of other social benefits. Nevertheless, poverty-free childhood for children in Lithuania is far from being guaranteed. First, the AROP and AROPE measures are still high and do not capture the dramatic change in prices. Secondly, the provision of services to families with children should also be examined.

The key services covered by the European Child Guarantee (ECG) cover high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC); education and school-based activities; at least one healthy meal each school day; and healthcare; and effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing. The latest ESPAN report for the EU indicates that the vast majority of the member states have mechanisms in place to ensure that all, or at least low-income, children have access to the services covered by the ECG. However, all 27 countries have challenges to meet. The study presents an overview of the financial and non-financial barriers to ECG and a useful

classification of those barriers. The presentation investigates the case of Lithuania within the EU context through the lenses of this report. The ECG framework shows that children in Lithuania still face both accessibility and affordability barriers to high-quality social and healthcare services. Like in other countries, these mostly affect low-income children from remote and rural areas, as well as vulnerable sectors of the population, such as asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, Roma children, and children with a migrant background.

[For more information on the latest ESPAN report on ECG read here.](#)



**Sheila Gois Habib**

#### **A Future Beyond Austerity: Breaking the Chains of Child Poverty**

The issue of child poverty in Europe persists as a pressing concern, necessitating a fundamental policy shift. Our presentation, titled "A Future Beyond Austerity: Breaking the Chains of Child Poverty," delves deeply into this critical matter. We will acknowledge that austerity measures, prevalent in the European context, have placed significant burdens on children and families, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage. It is imperative to envision and actively work toward a future where these chains of poverty are decisively dismantled.

Our discussion will revolve around innovative strategies and sustainable policy solutions that European Union institutions and member states should implement to comprehensively address the multifaceted challenges encountered by children and families living in impoverished conditions. EAPN strongly advocates for holistic approaches that encompass physical and mental well-being, equitable access to quality services, education, social inclusion, and policies fostering economic resilience.

Consequently, our presentation will serve as a call to action, challenging the prevailing austerity narrative and advocating for policies and practices that



prioritize the well-being and potential of every child. We aim to inspire collective action and cultivate a sense of shared responsibility toward a brighter, more equitable future – a future beyond austerity, where children and families can thrive and contribute fully to society.

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**Judith Ranftler**

### **“Child Poverty in Austria – Basic Child Guarantee and the Strategies of those who are Affected”**

The presentation on child poverty in Austria will, on the one hand, deal with the current situation of children experiencing poverty in Austria, building on data from Statistics Austria. On the other hand, research results of Volkshilfe will be presented, which deal with the experience of children and adolescents in poverty. In particular, the effects of poverty on social participation and health will be discussed and coping strategies of those affected will be presented.

Volkshilfe has developed a model of a basic child security scheme, which will be presented during the lecture. The introduction of the basic child security scheme would largely end child poverty in Austria. In addition, results of the field research from the project will be presented.

Volkshilfe Austria is one of the five largest non-governmental organizations in Austria and works in the field of care and social work.

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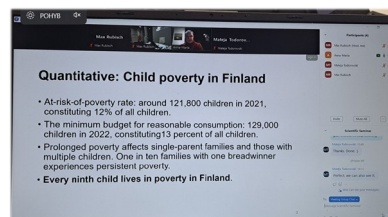
### **Kathleen Wabrowetz**

### **“Basic Security for Children in Germany – Current Developments”**

The social security system in Germany provides various support services for children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds. Due to a complex support system and bureaucratic obstacles, support is by no means accessible to all families and children.

For a long time, different political parties aim to make support services more accessible for families by creating a “basic child support”. The current government has now made this reform one of its most important social policy goals. With the beginning of 2025, the introduction of the basic child support is supposed to simplify different support services and make them more accessible to families in need. This presentation will show whether the reform will bring the promised change to the system and what would be needed to efficiently support families and children living in poverty.

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**Anna-Maria Isola**

### **“Quantitative and Qualitative View on Child Poverty in Finland”**

In Finland, every ninth child lives in poverty. Family poverty surged in the aftermath of the 1990s recession. It has been relatively even since then. According to the at-risk-of-poverty rate, around 121,800 children lived in low-income households in 2021, constituting 12% of all children in Finland. Based on the minimum budget for reasonable consumption in Finland, there were 129,000 children in 2022, just under 13 percent of all children. Prolonged poverty affects single-parent families and those with multiple children. One in ten families with one breadwinner experiences persistent poverty.

The impact of government austerity measures in forthcoming years targets the most vulnerable families with children. The projected cuts are anticipated to push over 12,000 children into low-income households. This exacerbates child poverty, infringing upon the right to an adequate standard of living guaranteed to every child by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Qualitative research shows that Finnish youth live in an ecologically unsustainable, consumption-centric culture where the offspring of low-income families

feel excluded. They cannot participate in social dining and entertainment and purchase branded clothing. Young people wrote extensively about stress, depression, and vague discomfort in their everyday life. If this sense of exclusion persists, it may harm their health in adulthood.

Quantitative analysis confirms these qualitative findings. The experienced social inclusion – formed by a sense of life manageability, feelings of belonging and meaningfulness, and equal opportunities for participation – supports individuals through temporary difficulties. The average ESIS (Experiences of Social Inclusion Scale) points decreased the most between 2019 and 2021 for those pupils who assessed their family's financial situation as poor. The worse they perceived their family's financial situation, the weaker their experiences of social inclusion. Disparities in the experiences of social inclusion deepen the inequality between the better-off and the worse-off.

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## Vida Česnuitytė

### **“Measures against Child and Family Poverty in Lithuania”**

As a welfare state, Lithuania provides numerous measures against poverty of children and families. Firstly, to be mentioned Child benefits paid irrespective of the family assets and income, and the additional assistance paid to families according to their income level, age and number of children. This assistance is provided from the State budget, irrespective of whether the person is insured with the State social insurance or not.

The guaranteed minimum resources, covered by the Cash social assistance system, is provided to families and single residents unable to provide themselves with sufficient resources to live. Measures include means-tested benefits such as Social benefit, and Reimbursement for the cost of house heating, hot water and drinking water. Cash social assistance, among others, provided to those taking care of a child under three, or under eight if the child is not in school on a doctors' recommendation or if they do not have an opportunity to attend a pre-school or pre-primary school. Entitlement to support is based on

an information about all possible income available to the household. Cash social assistance may be entitlement to citizens of Lithuania, aliens with a long-term permit to reside in Lithuania or in the EU, also the EU Member State citizens, a Member State of the European Free Trade Association in the European Economic Area or their family members who have the right of residence in Lithuania, and a foreign citizen who is granted asylum or temporary protection.

At the same time, it should be noticed and discussed problems related to access to social support for children in poverty: (a) dependence of children social support on parents' material situation and employment; (b) the effect of the changed family model on the social support application practice; (c) the problem of non-taking legally entitled social support.



**Eva  
Holmberg-Herrström**

### **“A Short Overview on Child Poverty in Sweden”**

In September 2023 the Swedish ICSW arranged an expert seminar on Child poverty in Sweden. The result of the seminar shows that Sweden has decreased its share of GDP directed to social security (29.3%) and is below the average in Europe (31.7%). This decrease in the budget for social security places Sweden on the 14<sup>th</sup> place of 20 European countries. The economy growth during the last 20 years has been favorable and most households have got a better economy. But the differences between low-income earners, middle-income earners and high-income earners have successively increased. The period between 2000-2017 characterized by diminishing ambitions regarding welfare, affected many families with children. The migration to Sweden, with long time before being established on the labour market and the housing market, has also affected the incidence of child poverty. The share of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion year 2021 were about 20% of the Swedish children under 18 years. The picture of the child poverty in Sweden shows a growing problem and that the Welfare system and the actions of the authorities are not sufficient to guarantee all children a childhood free from poverty.



## Alejandro Sanz Angulo

### **“Child Poverty in Spain and Vulnerability in Households with Economically Dependent Minors”**

Across the different reports published by EAPN-ES, age has been identified as a significant differentiating factor in vulnerability and the risk of poverty and/or exclusion among the population of Spain. While the primary indicators of child poverty and social exclusion have shown some improvement in the past year, the figures remain notably high, surpassing those of the general population. These consistently high figures, which have remained largely unchanged over the years, underscore the existence of a structural issue. Additionally, in a European context, the rate of the risk of poverty and/or exclusion for children and adolescents in Spain has always been notably elevated. For the year 2022, the AROPE rate among this demographic in Spain ranks as the third highest in Europe, trailing only behind Romania and Bulgaria.

This presentation will use various indicators to highlight the material difficulty that the presence of children and adolescents poses for a household. This difficulty is due to various reasons, which can be summarized as the fact that living with children and adolescents entails higher expenses for adults and, concurrently, reduced availability of time to generate income.

Drawing upon the insights of our national-level members, this report delivers timely and pertinent information from a civil society perspective. The primary focus of this presentation centres on the experiences of poverty and social exclusion endured by children, their families, and communities across 26 European countries, as evidenced by Eurochild members. Additionally, the presentation provides an invaluable perspective – directly from children themselves – on their experiences with poverty, offering a poignant and authentic portrayal of the challenges children face.

Importantly, the presentation delves into the role of current European Union (EU) policies and processes, such as the European Child Guarantee and the Semester Process, in mitigating child poverty and social exclusion. It contemplates their effectiveness in lifting children out of these circumstances, thus contributing to a comprehensive analysis of the existing landscape.

Moreover, the presentation contributes a diverse range of recommendations aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of EU policies and processes. These recommendations are grounded in practical insights, enhancing the potential for real-world impact in improving the lives of children and their families.

Ultimately, this contribution is not only about presenting a snapshot of the challenges faced by children, families, and communities living in poverty and social exclusion. It is about catalysing change, advancing knowledge, and propelling transformative action to ensure that children's rights are upheld, and their well-being is secured across Europe.



## Ally Dunhill

### **“Child Rights and Lived Experiences: from Children and CSOs across Europe”**

At Eurochild, children's rights form the basis of all areas of our work. The 2023 Eurochild Flagship Report serves as a comprehensive examination of the status of children's rights across Europe.

## Scientific seminar “Poverty of Children and Families”



On **30 November** and **1 December 2023**, ICSW Europe together with the Mykolas Romeris University Vilnius held a scientific seminar on “**Poverty of Children and Families**” in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Around fifty participants took part in the hybrid event (face to face and online form) that lasted one whole day (a half day on 30 November and a half day of 1 December 2023). The Seminar officially opened **Martynas Šiurkus** (Vice-Minister of Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour). His opening words were followed by **Jolanta Pivorienė** (Vice-Dean for International Relations and Projects of the Faculty of Human and Social Studies at Mykolas Romeris University) and **Max Rubisch** (ICSW Europe President).

The first issue of the Seminar was the Poverty of Children in the European Union as a whole. **Ally Dunhill (Eurochild)** reported that 25% of children in the EU are at Risk of Poverty and Exclusion (AROPE). The COVID pandemics, the war in Ukraine and the raising costs of energy have worsened the situation. Only six countries in the European Union have Ministers explicitly responsible for Children's Rights. All EU countries have National Action Plans against Child Poverty (except Austria and Latvia) – but having a NAP does not mean that the planned measures are implemented. **Sheila Gois Habib (European Anti-Poverty Network)** underlined that poverty is not an individual but a structural problem. The access to essential services and fundamental rights is not guaranteed, poor children suffer from discrimination and stigmatization. The European Welfare States are inadequately funded – austerity measures and the liberalisation of essential services have led to growing poverty.

There was consensus that the **European Child Guarantee** is a good initiative, but it is not enough. It is necessary to increase the Child Allowances and the Housing Allowances, Education should be free, the schools should serve free lunch and participation should be ensured by free public transport and free leisure activities.

The second issue was the situation in different European countries. **Jekaterina Navicke (Lithuania)** pointed out that in the last years the AROPE rate in Lithuania declined for children but is generally very high. The group most hit by poverty are single-parent families. Lithuania has low taxes and consequently also the social spending of the state is low. **Vida Cesnuiyte (Lithuania)** underlined that the family model has changed and many children are now beyond social protection. A study of Mykolas Romeris University shows that the Non-take-up-rate of social assistance is at 49%: the holders of rights often do not know about the availability of benefits or it seems too complicated for them to apply.

**Judith Ranftler (Austria)** presented an interesting project of a Basic Child Security that was led by Volkshilfe Austria during two years. The results show that a monthly financial benefit led to less conflicts in the family, to more freedom of choice in everyday life and generally to a better quality of life. **Kathleen Wabrowetz (Germany)** reported on the Basic Income for Children that is planned by the German government. It should start in 2025 but the project is still under hard political pressure and is not yet adopted by the parliament.

**Alejandro Sanz Angulo (Spain)** presented figures – the AROPE rate for children and adolescents in Spain is the third highest in the European Union, behind Romania and Bulgaria. The worst situation face single-parent households, ethnic minorities like Roma and unaccompanied migrant children. **Eva Holmberg-Herrström (Sweden)** reported that between 2000 and 2017 the income differences in Sweden increased very much and in the same time the budget for social protection decreased and fell under the EU average. **Anna-Maria Isola (Finland)** underlined that in Finland the new right-wing government is planning big cuts in the social system and austerity measures. This will certainly increase poverty and especially poverty of children and families.



## ICSW Europe General Assembly

The last part of the Seminar was a discussion between all participants, among them young students from different continents taking part in the **EU Program "Erasmus Mundus"** at Mykolas Romeris University. As a conclusion of the presentations the participants formulated the following **political demands**:

- Children should be respected as experts in their own right: we need a right-based and universal approach in favour of children;
- We need community-based training and vocational programs in cooperation with Civil Society Organizations;
- Family planning should be made compulsory;
- Funding should not go to governments but to Civil Society Organisations;
- A comprehensive model for Monitoring and Evaluation of programs and policy should be established at local level;
- Civil Society Organisations should be strengthened and should be involved in decision making and policy making;
- Examples of good practice are important where states should be given the possibility to learn from each other;
- In order to combat poverty, the Social Budgets should be exempted from the Deficit Rules of the European Union.



*author of the text and photo:*

**Max Rubisch**, President of ICSW Europe

For the whole programme of the Seminar, read [here](#).

Annual **ICSW Europe General Assembly** took part at Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania on **1 December 2023** (face to face and online combination).

### ***Program of the GA:***

- Opening the GA, Approval of the Agenda, Checking of Voting Rights (*paid-up members*);
- Approval of ICSW Europe GA Minutes held on 2 December 2022;
- Presentation of ICSW Europe Annual Activity Report 2023 (*for approval*);
- Report 2022 from the Treasurer (for adoption and discharging of responsibility, after the auditors have made their comments);
- Statement by the Auditors for 2022 accounts (*for approval and decision*);
- Updating of the Budget for 2023 and Approval of the Budget for 2024;
- Any Other Matters Arising;
- Closing the General Assembly

### Manifesto by AGE Platform Europe 2024 European Parliament Elections

[AGE Platform Europe] as a future Member of the European Parliament, you can make sure that the European Union addresses adequately population ageing and works toward a society for all ages.

We call on the next European Parliament to:

- 1) Promote age equality;
- 2) Foster participation and active ageing;
- 3) Ensure autonomy and well being.

How?

- 1) By working towards the adoption of an EU Age Equality Strategy, to uphold human rights equally at all ages and address barriers that keep us from living fairly and freely when we are older.
- 2) By requesting a strong coordination between European Commission's services whose work has a critical impact on ageing policies. This coordination shall be ensured by the Directorate General Justice and Consumers, responsible for equality.
- 3) By re-establishing the Intergroup on Ageing and Solidarity between Generations encouraging Members of the European Parliament to be champions for the rights of older persons.

The full document can be downloaded [here](#).

(source: AGE Platform Europe. Manifesto by AGE Platform Europe 2024 European Parliament Elections. [online]. [cit 2024-2-3]. Available at: <[https://agemanifestoep2024.files.wordpress.com/2023/12/agemanifesto2024\\_en.pdf](https://agemanifestoep2024.files.wordpress.com/2023/12/agemanifesto2024_en.pdf)>)

### European Semester 2023: EAPN urges Commission to prioritise social rights over profits



The European Semester continues to prioritise profits over societal well-being and in particular those living in poverty. **EAPN highlights the need for a comprehensive, rights-based, person-centred anti-poverty strategy that tackles energy poverty, promotes equitable access to essential services, and recalibrates fiscal priorities in favour of social welfare and green initiatives, amongst others.**

It is evident from the 2023 Spring Package that despite the semi-recent 2008 financial crisis, the EU has still failed to learn its lessons and to put forward comprehensive social investment/social rights strategies to secure social welfare.

**“This analysis raised concerns about the resurgence of austerity measures, skyrocketing energy poverty rates, and the rising burden of inflation, all of which disproportionately affect vulnerable households.”**

It is time that EU Member States learn from the past, and focus on anti-cyclical measures that **prioritise investment in recovery, fiscal justice, and the protection of social rights.**

[Read the Position Paper here](#)

(source: EAPN. European Semester 2023: EAPN urges Commission to prioritise social rights over profits. [online]. [cit 2024-2-3]. Available at: <<https://www.eapn.eu/european-semester-eapn-urges-commission-to-prioritise-social-rights-over-profits/>>)



IFSW

## Lisbon declaration for the Development of Social Work and Humanitarian Action

On November 16, 2023, in Lisbon, within the activities of the ISCTE Winter School, and as a result of the Erasmus+ INOVHUMRE project, involving partners from Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Colombia and Brazil\* the presidents of IFSW, IASSW and ICSW, and the representatives of ISCTE and UNED, have signed the **Lisbon Declaration for the development of Social Work and Humanitarian Action in the 21st century**.

It is a declaration that puts on the table the strengthening of humanitarian aid, the improvement of the competencies and skills of social workers, the design of new training programs, and the need to bet on participation and co-design as strategies to improve social inclusion. In this sense, this declaration is a very relevant contribution to social work in the field of humanitarian aid, approved with the unanimous consensus of IFSW, IASSW and ICSW.

*Annamaria Campanini, President of IASSW, commented, "The Lisbon Declaration is a milestone in our collective journey towards a more equitable and responsive social work environment globally. Its focus on specialized training and digitalization reflects the evolving needs of our times and the necessity of staying ahead in our humanitarian endeavors."*

*Joachim [Mumba], President of IFSW, added, "This Declaration marks a new era in humanitarian action, where collaboration between state, civil society, private sectors and ordinary community members is paramount. The emphasis on peace, security, and good governance as foundational principles paves the way for more effective and equitable social interventions."*

*Sang-Mok Suh, President of ICSW, stated, "The Lisbon Declaration's call for international cooperation and its inclusion in the European Agenda signify a major step forward in global social work and*

*humanitarian efforts. The creation of a digital platform and the push for internationalizing universities are particularly exciting developments, promising a future of shared knowledge and innovative practices."*

[Download the Lisbon Declaration HERE](#)

\* *Fundacao Getulio Vargas – Brazil; Icesi University – Colombia; Hacettepe Universitesi – Turkey; Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED) – Spain; Instituto Marques de Valle Flor – Portugal; Magtel Foundation – Spain; Sened Derneği Turkey; Sosyal Hizmet Uzmanları Derneği Ankara Şubesi – Turkey*



From left to right: *Paulo Pedroso, Director INOVHUMRE; Antonio López Peláez, UNED-ICSW; Jorge M. Ferreira, ISCTE; Sang-Mok Suh, ICSW President; Annamaria Campanini, IASSW President; Joachim Mumba, IFSW President*

(source: International Federation of Social Workers. Lisbon declaration for the development of Social Work and Humanitarian Action. [online]. [cit 2024-1-31]. Available at: <[https://www.ifsw.org/lisbon-declaration-for-the-development-of-social-work-and-humanitarian-action/?utm\\_source=News+signup&utm\\_campaign=2b7af5a928-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_NEWS&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f1659bc18d-2b7af5a928-81745058#\\_ftn1](https://www.ifsw.org/lisbon-declaration-for-the-development-of-social-work-and-humanitarian-action/?utm_source=News+signup&utm_campaign=2b7af5a928-RSS_EMAIL_NEWS&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f1659bc18d-2b7af5a928-81745058#_ftn1)>)

## Council of Europe



## European Economic and Social Committee



### 17 January: Online debate with the three candidates for the Human Rights Commissioner's position of the Council of Europe: summary

with

**Meglana Kuneva**

Ambassador of the European Union to the Council of Europe (2018-2022)

**Manfred Nowak**

UN Expert, Secretary General at the Global Campus for Human Rights

**Michael O'Flaherty**

Director at FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2015-2023)

Please find CVs of the three candidates at this [link](#).

Moderation:

**Ioulietta Bisiouli**

Director at the European Implementation Network, a CURE and CINGO member organisation

200+ participants from civil society organisations, academia and public institutions attended the event.

The candidates had been asked by the organisers before the event to provide written input on a number of questions. Their replies were made available to the participants before the event.

The full recording of the online session is available [here](#).

(source: NGO-Unit. E-mail on 22 January 2024. <NGO-Unit@coe.int>)

### Towards a European strategy for older persons

Europe is facing a fast demographic change. It is by now common knowledge that the large bars in the European demographic pyramid are pushing upwards to ever-more dizzying heights, propped up by a thinning base of younger generations.

The European Union has not been active in addressing demographic change. In fact, the few policies presented to date – the EU Green Paper or the EU Care Strategy – evolve around the concept of assistance and support to older people, ignoring the possibilities that an ageing society brings about.

To break this cycle, the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU asked the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on 8 December 2022 to draft an exploratory opinion on a possible future European strategy for older people, which the EESC did under the rapporteurship of *Miguel Ángel Cabra de Luna*.

To discuss the EESC opinion, which was adopted at the EESC plenary on 12 July 2023, and the development of a possible EU strategy more broadly, the EESC organised a conference in Madrid on 29 November, 2023 with the support of the Spanish Presidency. This article aims to bring together the thoughts and ideas exchanged during that Madrid conference in a digestible three-part format.

First, it lays out the challenges and the opportunities that ageing creates for Europe. Then, the report takes a cursory look at the relevant EU policies to date, before it finally sketches some avenues for a future EU strategy for older people, based on the discussions that took place at the Madrid conference.



(source: European Economic and Social Committee. Report: Towards a European strategy of older persons. [online]. [cit 2024-2-3]. Available at: <<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/present-and-future-eu-policy-older-persons-0/report>>)

## Conferences/Expert Meetings

### Social Work Education and Social Development 2024



Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development 2024 will be hosted in Panama City, Panama, from April 4 to 7. The SWSD2024 will be jointly hosted by International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Federation of Social Workers and International Council on Social Welfare.

Please find attached the preliminary program of SWSD 2024 for your information and for more information, please visit

<https://swsd2024.opc.uy/en/programa/extendido/keynote-plenary-session>.

## Publications

### First Allianz Foundation Next Generations Study



[In October 2023] it was launched **the first Allianz Foundation Next Generations Study**. The report, titled *“The Movers of Tomorrow? How Young Adults in Europe Imagine and Shape the Future”*, is based on a representative survey of 10,000 young adults in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom, aged 18 to 39. It explores the young generation's expectations for the future as well as their willingness to take civic action at all levels, from social movements to voting to everyday practices.

You can find the study in full [here](#).

The findings show: young adults in Europe are deeply concerned about the future. They expect their societies to become less fair, less safe, and more divided. And yet, so far only a few are organizing as part of citizens' initiatives or protesting in the streets – although many are willing to get more involved in these and other forms of collective action. But their trust in the established institutions and modes of political participation and civic engagement is low.

To help strengthen civic engagement across Europe, we have also produced a [strategy paper](#), outlining 15 recommended actions for civil society and its public and private funders and supporters. The strategies were developed by civil society leaders, artists and journalists from across Europe as part of the Allianz Foundation Future Labs, seven interactive workshops which took place earlier this year.

**Dr. Simon Morris-Lange**

Head of Research

(source: Allianz Foundation. *The Movers of Tomorrow?* [online]. [cit 2024-1-31]. Available at: <<https://allianzfoundation.org/study/movers-of-tomorrow/>>)

## Useful Links

AGE Platform Europe: Manifesto by AGE Platform Europe, 2024 European Parliament Elections:

[https://agemanifestoep2024.files.wordpress.com/2023/12/agemanifesto2024\\_en.pdf](https://agemanifestoep2024.files.wordpress.com/2023/12/agemanifesto2024_en.pdf)

IFSW: Lisbon declaration for the Development of Social Work and Humanitarian Action:

[https://www.ifsw.org/lisbon-declaration-for-the-development-of-social-work-and-humanitarian-action/?utm\\_source=News+signup&utm\\_campaign=2b7af5a928-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_NEWS&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f1659bc18d-2b7af5a928-81745058#\\_ftn1](https://www.ifsw.org/lisbon-declaration-for-the-development-of-social-work-and-humanitarian-action/?utm_source=News+signup&utm_campaign=2b7af5a928-RSS_EMAIL_NEWS&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f1659bc18d-2b7af5a928-81745058#_ftn1)

17 January: Online debate with the three candidates for the Human Rights Commissioner's position of the Council of Europe:

<https://hidrive.ionos.com/lnk/1wSTogQT#file>

European Economic and Social Committee – Towards a European strategy for older persons (report):

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/present-and-future-eu-policy-older-persons-0/report>

SWSD 2024 conference – a preliminary programme:

<https://swsd2024.opc.uy/en/programa/extendido/keynote-plenary-session/2024-04-03>

## 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.

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