

## ICSW EUROPE NEWSLETTER

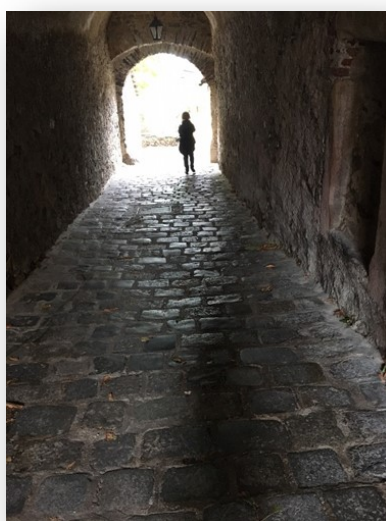
**1/2021**

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*There is light at the end of the 'COVID-19' tunnel.*  
Photo: Ronald Wiman, Dürnstein, Austria

## A Message from the President

*"We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organization of this farm depends on us. Day and night we are watching over your welfare. It is for your sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples. "*

*(Animal Farm by George Orwell, 1945, ch.3)*

### Modern social policy is not based on charity

The hand of the giver is always above the hand of the one who receives. Social policy is – or should be – based on equality and entitlements. Charity can work as a complement. But basically, as members of society we have – or should have – equal rights and responsibilities. This is the foundation of Welfare States. It is also the anchoring value base of European Social Charter *"...the member States of the Council of Europe agreed to secure to their populations the social rights specified therein in order to improve their standard of living and their social well-being"* ([European Social Charter](#), 1996).

### Wellbeing is multidimensional

Wellbeing has material and nonmaterial dimensions. The Finnish Sociologist *Erik Allardt* summarized this in the 1970s in the concepts of Having, Loving, Being (1). The message was: we can drive a good life provided we have 'material' resources (including health and education), social resources and access to meaningfully integrate into society and to live in harmony with nature. We should add a fourth dimension: Doing. We are satisfied with our life course if it is filled with meaningful activities. Conclusion: nobody can *give* us our wellbeing. We produce our wellbeing from those personal resources and external opportunities that are available to us now – and can reasonably expect to continue in the foreseeable future. Having, Loving and Being are not much correlated. Wellbeing does not result by summing up Having+Loving+Being. One dimension cannot replace or compensate the other. Rather, wellbeing is a *product* of (Having) x (Loving) x (Being). This means: if one factor is low (or zero), wellbeing is low (or zero).

Many studies have shown that happiness or satisfaction with life does not follow from wealth. Of course, it is better to be wealthy and healthy than poor and ill. Development of Wellbeing Indexes does not follow economic growth. In the OECD countries, the UNICEF multidimensional Child Wellbeing Index is not correlated with the level of income per capita (2). But income inequality has a clear and strong negative correlation with child wellbeing.

**A whole year now we have lived lives full of deprivations:** some have lost their livelihoods, some have lived in social isolation, some have lost their dreams and faith for future. This year has deprived all people of some of their wellbeing. We have realized how important all four of these dimensions are for our lives and how for instance lack of social life and lack of access to cultural events has decreased our wellbeing. Those who have already been most vulnerable have been hardest hit. Young people have been deprived a long period of their youth. UNESCO estimated that COVID-19 forced 1.6 billion students out of their classrooms in more than 190 countries (3). Mental health problems of youth have increased but service delivery has not been able to stretch enough to meet the need. 'Lost' opportunities in childhood and youth do have a long shadow. Servicing public debts caused by COVID-19 by cutting from education and social sectors would be a bad idea.

Older people have been deprived of social life for a large percentage of their remaining years. For many meeting their children and grandchildren were the most important thing in life. Many have not seen them for several months. Many do not even have phones or computers capable for video meetings. There is a dire need to boost access to older people to basic ICT skills and essential gadgets and connections.

**The handling of the pandemic has been very much top-down.** Decisions on what is good for people's wellbeing have been *taken care of* by authorities. Many people feel that the effectiveness of various strict measures has not always been empirically proven or convincingly explained. The cost side of risks and remedies has been too little dialogued between decision makers and those affected. There is the need to make thorough benefit/cost evaluations in order to learn for eventual future crises. Non-material losses – in the loving and being dimensions of wellbeing – need to be included in such studies. As

a rule this is not how decisions have been made in Europe this time. Dealing with major crises cannot continue to be a monopoly domain of single professions – this time the juridical and the medical ones. Multisectoral institutional arrangements for dealing with complex crises must be designed in advance.

**Now it is important to put people and their multidimensional wellbeing at the centre of the just recovery and transformation towards a greener Europe**

People are the beneficiaries – and also agents of action, once given the opportunity to act for the common good.

With the understanding of human beings as active agents of their own lives the modern social work has developed from care taking approach to participatory enablement and social policy from remedial approach to prevention and empowerment.

**Civil society organizations must continue to advocate for recovery programs that are 1) ethically right, 2) socially fair and participatory, 3) ecologically sustainable, 4) technically feasible, and 5) economically efficient. In this priority order.**

1)  
Erik Allardt: Having, Loving, Being: An Alternative to the Swedish Model of Welfare Research in Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (1993): Quality of Life;  
[Having, Loving, Being: An Alternative to the Swedish Model of Welfare Research - Oxford Scholarship \(universitypressscholarship.com\)](https://www.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1017/9780198791111.003)

2)  
UNICEF: Child Wellbeing in Rich Countries. A comparative overview (2013)  
[https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc11\\_eng.pdf](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc11_eng.pdf)

3)  
UNESCO Report  
<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/covid-19-how-unesco-global-education-coalition-tackling-biggest-learning-disruption>

(author: Ronald Wiman, ICSW Europe President)

## New ICSW Europe Board

The Association of ICSW Europe General Assembly has the mandate to appoint the Board members of the Association, with exception of the President and the Treasurer that are elected in conjunction with the Global ICSW elections. In 2020 the Global GA finalised election of only the President of ICSW Europe. Global ICSW General Assembly on its meeting held on November 8, 2020 (in online form) appointed Mr. **Ronald Wiman** to the post of the **President of ICSW Europe**. The members of ICSW Europe General Assembly voted for the Vice-President, Treasurer and two Board members per rollam by December 17, 2020. The Election Committee announced the results of the elections as follows:

**Jean-Michel Hôte** – Vice-President  
**Monika Büning** – Treasurer  
**Vadim Moldovan** – Board member  
**Alina Petrauskienė** – Board member



**Ronald Wiman**  
President

Mr. *Ronald Wiman* (Finland) was elected Europe Region President of the international Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) in 2018 and re-elected in 2020. He is Chair of the Finnish ICSW Committee that is hosted by SOSTE, the Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health.

He retired from Government service in 2019 as Chief Social Policy Specialists at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), then working for the EU-Social Protection Systems Programme (EU-SPS), that was supporting eleven developing countries in their efforts to systematize their social protection ([www.thl.fi/eu-sps](http://www.thl.fi/eu-sps)).

He has decades of experience in national and global social policy issues. In Finland he has worked in various expert and managerial positions at THL and at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Helsinki University. In between his Government service he has worked eight years abroad: Senior Social Services Advisor at the Namibian Ministry for Health and Social Services, as Social Affairs Officer at the United Nations Disabled Persons Unit in Vienna and as Associate Lecturer in Demography at the UN Regional Institute for Population Studies (UNRIPS), Accra, Ghana. Short-term assignments he has had with e.g. the UN, World Bank, the WHO, UNICEF, Asian Development Bank and German GIZ.

His special fields include social policy, socially sustainable development, population policies, disability and development, poverty of children, international labor migration, strategic planning and management training. He has lectured on various fora and written numerous publications on these topics and produced several web-based toolboxes and information packages on Global Social Policy.

He has an MA and the post-graduate Licentiate degree in Social Sciences/International Social Policy from University of Helsinki, Finland, and specialized training in Demography (University of Chicago, USA).



**Jean-Michel Hôte**  
Vice-President

Mr. *Jean-Michel Hôte* is a Master in political sciences ("Ecole des Sciences Politiques de Paris") with forty years activity in social protection (French complementary pension scheme from 1974 to 1985, later in social gerontology as a Director and a Secretary General from 1986 to 2013).

He was a member of the Council of EURAG (European organisation for elderly – founded in 1962; headquarters in Austria) in 1986 – 2000.

He was named a Treasurer of the French Committee in 2007 and has been in this position up to the year 2021.

He was in the position of ICSW Europe Treasurer from 2014 GA in Bratislava (initial mandate of two years

renewed once in 2016 up to 2018), then he was elected in 2018 to the position of Vice-President.

He has been a pensioner since 2013 and he pursues some missions in France and Europe as a volunteer.

In Europe, he has been a member of Age Platform Europe Council since 2013 and was elected as a Treasurer in 2017 and re-elected in 2020.



**Monika Büning**  
Treasurer

My name is *Monika Büning*, and I started to work in the German Association for Public and Private Welfare in May 2020. I am the Head of Department for International Affairs.

I studied Political Science, History, Anthropology and Comparative Central European Studies. After I finished my studies, I worked in the Federation of German Consumer Organisations for more than 15 years. There I worked in an international context i.e., by chairing a working group in a transatlantic dialogue. I also contributed to a project application on consumer protection in China that succeeded. I am a European from my heart and convinced of the European Idea.

I am looking forward to working together with all the members of ICSW in Europe and hopefully we will be able to meet face to face soon.



**Vadim Moldovan**  
Board member

Dr. *Vadim Moldovan*, PhD, is a Professor of Social Work, currently teaching at the Free International University of Moldova and the City University of New York. He is an ICSW Europe Board member. Dr. Moldovan's expertise encompasses clinical social work in psychiatric settings, emergency social work in hospital settings, and administrative social work at residential, outpatient treatment, and crisis intervention agencies. He is a twice Fulbright Scholar Award recipient, and his work in Eastern Europe resulted in establishing an effective platform for international academic social work



collaboration. Specific outcomes include several international social work conferences organized in Eastern Europe, launching of a graduate school of social work at the Free International University of Moldova, founding of the National Association of Social Workers in Moldova, Vocational Rehabilitation Center for the chronically mentally ill, and a rural community development project. Along with these accomplishments came a large body of international research and scholarship – publications and conference presentations. Dr. *Moldovan* is the Director of NGO Project Casa Mare, an ICSW Europe member organization that hosted an ICSW Europe conference in Moldova in 2019.



**Alina Petrauskienė**  
Board member

Ms. *Alina Petrauskienė* (Lithuania) is a member of ICSW Europe Board. She is an Associated Professor at the Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work (University of Mykolas Romeris, Vilnius) in BA and MA degree programs, she also teaches in a training course in Professional Skills Development Programs for Social Work practitioners. She actively participates in the implementation of international projects funded by the European Commission RESME “On the Borders between Residential Child Care and Mental Health Treatment in Europe” and ERCCI “Empowering Residential Child Care Through Interprofessional Training”. At Mykolas Romeris University, she works as a project team coordinator and researcher. Her area of research interest is competencies of support specialists in the child welfare sector, creation of supervision and reflection environments for improvement of social work competencies. She is an author and co-author of 3 scientific studies and over 30 scientific publications.

Lots of problems are waiting for ICSW in connection with social welfare destabilization due to the current pandemic crisis in Europe. As a member of Lithuanian National Committee of ICSW Europe, she will disseminate the results of ongoing international projects that can be valuable for the developing social welfare of other countries.

ICSW Europe President thanks our colleague Mr. **Njal Petter Swensson** of Norway for his devoted contribution as member in the previous ICSW Europe Board.

## ICSW Europe Members

**SOSTE**

### Finland – top wellbeing country

*“If you want to live the American dream you must move to Sweden”* – said the former president of Finland, *Martti Ahtisaari*. He could have said “.. move to Finland, but as a diplomat he chose to praise the neighbour instead. Indeed, in the Nordic countries equality of opportunity is more real than in most countries of the World.

The World Happiness Report WHR of 2021 was published for the celebration of the **International Day of Happiness on March 20<sup>th</sup>**. It concluded again, the fourth time in a row, that Finland is the happiest country in the World. The first WHR was published in April 2012 in support of a UN High level meeting on “Wellbeing and Happiness: Defining a New Economic Paradigm”. Happiness, subjective wellbeing, is measured by interviews asking people to *“evaluate their current life as a whole using the image of a ladder, with the best possible life for them as a 10 and worst possible as a 0.”* The methodology is called as ‘Cantril Ladder’ and is considered to be quite valid and reliable.

The subjective happiness League Table for 2020 is as follows:

1. Finland
2. Denmark
3. Switzerland
4. Iceland
5. Netherlands
6. Norway
7. Sweden
8. Luxembourg
9. New Zealand
10. Austria

The WHR is actually a very informative piece of Quality of Life research. It summarizes extensively other research and also reports on six other indicators that 'explain' people's experiences of life satisfaction. These are: Gross domestic product per capita, Social support, Healthy life expectancy, Freedom to make your own life choices, Generosity, and Perceptions of corruption.

All the ten countries have top values on the above six variables. The differences between the ten 'winners' are quite small. The order has changed a little year by year but basically the list of ten has remained quite stable. Thus, more useful than focusing on the order is to distill the main ingredients of success in enabling people to achieve their wellbeing. Gross Domestic Product per capita is *not* the main source of happiness:

*"Of the top ten richest countries in the world, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Switzerland rank similarly to Nordic countries in terms of both high life satisfaction and low inequality of life satisfaction scores. In contrast, the other richest countries – the United States, United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, and especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait – have a more unequal distribution of happiness, and the average life satisfaction in these countries is lower than in the Nordics."*

The explaining factors for the top ten happiest countries can be found in the well-functioning democracy and quality of the government and public institutions that create generalized trust in society. Civil society organizations keep the government and authorities accountable.

Material prosperity, with generous social security combined with high sense of autonomy and freedom in liberal value environment create experience of good command of one's own life. Social cohesion is also a central explanation of happiness. Equality – or low inequality – may also be one of the main ingredients of both societal cohesion and people's experience of security and happiness.

Furthermore, the report also says that *"societies with higher trust in public institutions and greater income equality were shown to be more successful in fighting COVID-19 as measured by 2020 rates of COVID-19 deaths*. The COVID-19 death rate by now in Finland has been third lowest in Europe, 14.6 per 100,000 of the population. The lowest rates have been in Iceland (8.1)

and Norway (12.2). In Sweden the death rate was 130.1 per 100,000 of the population.

[Europe: coronavirus deaths per 100,000 by country | Statista](#)

Until now, something has been done right in Finland. But we do not yet understand well what it was.

The cherry on top of the cake is that Finns are also happy taxpayers. According to the Tax Administration survey of 2019 even 80% are happy to pay their taxes as they trust that taxes are used to funding the Welfare State – a thing that people greatly value.

[Facts and feelings: Do taxes make Finnish people happy? - thisisFINLAND](#)

authors:

**Ronald Wiman**, Chair of the Finnish ICSW Committee

**Kirsi Marttinen**, Senior Advisor, SOSTE Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health, Secretary of Finnish ICSW Committee



The happiness survey was conducted by Gallup World Poll. The study covers some 150 countries. The survey sample in each country has been 1,000 people. The report is produced by Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and The Center for Sustainable Development (CSD) at Columbia University directed by Jeffrey D. Sachs.

In WHR 2021 Report the main theme was COVID-19  
<https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2021/>

The report 2020 covered e.g. Environment and had a separate analysis of Nordic countries  
<https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2020/>

## EAPN Statement on EC Proposal for EU Directive on minimum wages



EAPN welcomes the resumption of **guaranteed decent pay and working conditions for all workers** as a political priority at EU level. It is important that initiatives, including the [proposal for an EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages in the European Union](#), are embedded in an **overarching framework made up by the Action Plan** for the European Pillar of Social Rights and an integrated anti-poverty strategy. The economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic make **the need for courageous and decisive action at EU level** and for joint efforts of all relevant stakeholders within the Member States even more urgent than before!

Adequate minimum wages – or more generally living wages – are of great importance in improving the living and working conditions of people. They are **important tools to guarantee and realise social and labour rights**. Overall, they are crucial to tackle in-work poverty and precarious employment conditions.

Which points need to be reflected in the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages?



- Minimum wages should be considered a basic social right for all workers.
- They should exist and be enforced in all sectors of the economy.
- Minimum wages should be set in a non-discriminatory way.
- No variations for specific groups, sub-minimum rates or deductions for costs should be applied.

- Whether minimum wage levels in a country can be considered adequate should be regularly monitored and assessed by EU policy monitoring processes, using specific baskets of goods and services.
- Adequate minimum wages should guarantee a decent standard of living and ensure people's full participation in society in line with an active inclusion approach.
- Minimum wages should be poverty-proof: statutory minimum wages should never fall below a “decency threshold” of 60% of the national median wage and 50% of the national average wage.
- The existence of and full compliance with transparent mechanisms and participatory procedures to set and update minimum wages is essential.
- A positive hierarchy between adequate minimum income and decent minimum wages needs to be established while guaranteeing a decent standard of living, free of poverty, by means of an adequate minimum income for everybody.
- Collective bargaining across all sectors and for vulnerable workers, must be strengthened, with a framework which fully includes different categories of vulnerable workers.

[Read the statement](#)

(source – text and photo: EAPN; available at: <https://mailchi.mp/f59dbb297a6d/ec-proposal-for-eu-directive-on-minimum-wages?e=2baab4c54d>).

**Involving people with disabilities**  
Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of  
Persons with Disabilities in Germany



In 2017, the Act to Strengthen the Participation and Self-Determination of Persons with Disabilities (Federal Participation Act, BTHG) came into force in Germany. The Act develops German social law in accordance with the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Central points are therefore a new concept of disability that is oriented towards society's understanding of an inclusive society in accordance with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the transition from institution-centred to person-centred, improvements to participation in education and working life, and the strengthening of counselling for persons with disabilities by other affected persons. The amendments to the law have entered into force in stages since 2017. The final changes will apply from 1 January 2023.

The situation in Germany is special, because the social system rests on several pillars for historical reasons. They are partly financed by contributions, partly by taxes. The pillars have different access requirements and provide different types and amounts of services for the rehabilitation and participation of people with disabilities. The Federal Participation Act affects all pillars, but the most comprehensive changes were made in the integration assistance. Until the end of 2019, integration assistance was part of social assistance. People with disabilities could claim these benefits if their disability-related needs were not covered by the other systems and they were "needy", i.e., fell below legally defined income and asset limits. Since 2020, integration assistance and social assistance are now separate benefits that can be claimed independently of each other. As one result all contracts between the providers of integration assistance – Länder and municipalities – the providers of services and the persons with disabilities had to be revised and concluded anew. The non-for-profit welfare service provider and private providers of social services had to reorganize themselves economically. People with disabilities are more

involved in all processes, but they also have more obligations as a result.

Due to the far-reaching legal changes brought about by the Federal Participation Act, the Federal Government and the Länder (federal states) have agreed that the providers of integration assistance should be supported in its implementation. To this end, the project "Implementation Support for the Federal Participation Act" was launched in 2017. The office is located at the German Association for Public and Private Welfare. The project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs until the end of 2022. The aim of the project is to communicate the intention, background, and regulatory content of the Federal Participation Act to the professional public, to map questions from practice and to enable knowledge transfer and exchange between all stakeholders affected by the Act. On the project website [www.umsetzungsbegleitung-bthg.de](http://www.umsetzungsbegleitung-bthg.de), the "BTHG Compass" is a constantly growing compendium of questions and answers on the topics of the Federal Partial Participation Act. In face-to-face and digital events, experts communicate the state of scientific knowledge and participants exchange their practical experience. Regional conferences with the federal states provide an additional platform for stakeholders from all areas of the social law triangle to exchange information on the implementation status of the Federal Partial Participation Act and to discuss good examples and current challenges.

Further information on the project: [www.umsetzungsbegleitung-bthg.de](http://www.umsetzungsbegleitung-bthg.de) (only in German language).

(authors:

**Mechthild Nigbur**, Project Manager Federal Participation Act-Project, German Association for Public and Private Welfare

**Monika Büning**, Head of Department for International Affairs, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Member of the ICSW Europe Board)



## A missed opportunity? SP's initial reaction to the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented economic, employment, and social crises, exacerbating pre-existing social inequalities and bringing to the surface the weaknesses of existing social protection systems.

It is therefore no surprise that, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey of around 27,000 people in the 27 EU countries, 88% of Europeans consider a “social Europe” to be important to them personally. Some of the most pressing problems they highlighted regard equal opportunities, access to the labour market, fair working conditions, access to quality health care, the living standard in the EU as well as social protection and inclusion. 71% said they consider a lack of social rights to be a problem.

This demonstrates that people across the Union expect the EU and its Member States to take ambitious and comprehensive action to build a more socially just and inclusive Europe for all.

### Social Platform's initial reaction to key aspects of the Social Pillar Action Plan



Since the proclamation of the Social Pillar in 2017, Social Platform has been advocating for the comprehensive and ambitious implementation of the Social Pillar through EU and national action on all 20 Pillar principles. [SP has] equally been calling for an Action Plan that sets ambitious targets and measures at EU level and

makes strong recommendations for related action at national level to fully implement all 20 Pillar principles. This is now more important than ever to address the socio-economic impact of the pandemic and to ensure Europe's social recovery for all. [SP] therefore welcome [s] the publication of the long-awaited Social Pillar [Action Plan](#).

Unfortunately, according to SP, the proposed Action Plan misses the opportunity to be a comprehensive and ambitious implementation plan for the Social Pillar and to ensure that the Social Pillar can indeed be the compass to Europe's recovery.

Social Platform sees the shortcomings in the following spheres:

- 1) Lack of coverage of all 20 principles of the Social Pillar;
- 2) insufficient number and ambition of EU targets;
- 3) the role of the European Semester process in monitoring the implementation of the Social Pillar;
- 4) Social Scoreboard revision;
- 5) stakeholder involvement;
- 6) coherence of the Action Plan with other EU initiatives.

The European Commission foresees a review of the Action Plan in 2025, setting further action at EU level to achieve the 2030 targets. As the proposed Action Plan does not foresee action on all 20 Pillar principles, it is crucial that this review fills in the blanks and ensures that comprehensive and ambitious action is taken on all 20 Pillar principles.

(source: Social Platform; available at: <https://www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Social-Platform-initial-reaction-to-the-European-Pillar-of-Social-Rights-Action-Plan-1.pdf>)

## Social Platform Virtual Flagship Conference

Flagship Conference 2021



Social Platform Flagship Conference (4 – 5 May 2021) will take place in collaboration with the Portuguese Government in the framework of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union – ahead of the EU Social Summit taking place on 7 May in Porto (Portugal).

The Flagship Conference will serve as an opportunity to develop key recommendations to Heads of State and Government and EU decision-makers present at the Social Summit.

The Flagship Conference will focus on the different ways that the European Union should lead its recovery process and reinforce the social dimension that must be at the heart of any solution to build a socially just and inclusive society for all, which is resilient to future crises.

Read here more about the [conference](#).

[The Provisional Programme](#)

Find out more about SP's call for member-led workshops [here](#).

## AGE Platform Europe



### The EU Green Paper on Ageing is out: Let's mobilise!

The European Commission has released its **Green Paper on Ageing**. This publication opens a 12-week consultation (**from 27 January to 21 April 2021**) for all Europeans to debate on the challenges and opportunities of Europe's ageing society.

AGE published a [press release](#) following the release of the Green Paper. There AGE Platform called for a far-reaching consultation that would collect the views of older people on the ground.

AGE will prepare a response to the consultation. A first draft will be shared with you in the coming weeks. But we encourage AGE members to respond to the consultation too.

[Read the EU Green Paper on Ageing](#)  
[Read the European Commission's factsheet](#)

[Access the public consultation](#) (open until 21 April)

(source: AGE Platform Europe; available at: <<https://mailchi.mp/age-platform.eu/age-newsflash-eu-green-paper-on-ageing?e=4730b7e99f>>)

## Council of Europe



### Webinar: the importance of migrants' remittances in times of crisis



A virtual parliamentary webinar on the importance of migrants' remittances in times of crisis heard evidence of the impact of COVID-19 on amounts being sent home by migrants, and discussed ways of keeping these transfers flowing and making them easier.

The webinar, which was organised by [PACE's Migration Committee](#) and its [Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies](#), took place on 5 October 2020 and brought together international experts in the field, representatives of companies involved in making transfers and parliamentarians.

Ideas discussed included ways of improving data-collection about remittances, making transfers easier and cheaper using new technologies, and maximising the impact of remittances.

### [Video of the webinar](#)

(source: PACE; available at: <<https://pace.coe.int/en/news/8028/webinar-the-importance-of-migrants-remittances-in-times-of-crisis>>)

## Expert Council on NGO Law publishes a Review on NGO Participation in Policy Development



The Expert Council on NGO Law of the Council of Europe published a **review** that examines practices related to participation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in policy development in the member States of the Council of Europe (CoE). It is conducted against the background of standards and principles set out in the CoE instruments governing and facilitating this participation. The review discusses good practices as well as challenges associated with NGOs participation, with a view of providing an additional guide for the member States to ensure proper application of the CoE standards and principles. Towards that end, the review underscores the need for the member States to take on a holistic approach with regard to NGOs participation, so that they are included at all stages of policy development as appropriate, as well as ensure that consultation is open, inclusive and non-discriminatory.

Full review read [here](#).

(source: Council of Europe, Conference of INGOs; available at: [link](#))

## World Health Organization



### 2021: International year of Health and Care Workers

WHO has designated 2021 the **International Year of Health and Care Workers** (YHCW) in recognition of their dedication to providing care during and despite the COVID-19 pandemic that has challenged health systems worldwide.

Health and care workers include all those engaged in health services, public health and related areas, as well as those providing support to these activities. This varied category of workers encompasses health professionals such as doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists and physiotherapists, but also allied health professionals such as mental health workers, **social care workers**, occupational health workers, radiographers, laboratory workers and others.

During the 73rd World Health Assembly, Member States spoke to the critical role of health and care workers in ensuring individuals' and communities' health and well-being. Member States emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated why all health and care workers are critical to health emergency responses and for health system preparedness and resilience.

### Health and care workers deserve concrete action

Beyond offering praise and applause, the YHCW aims to energize countries to collaboratively tackle persistent health and care worker challenges.

The health and well-being of the health and care workforce have always been important, but are now even more vital. As societies grapple with the consequences of prolonged stress and pressure on health and care workers, it is important that Member States take concrete steps to address their needs.

Throughout the year, WHO/Europe will work in collaboration with partners to show appreciation to the workforce dedicated to the health and care of others, and to advocate for concerted efforts to:

- improve their working conditions
- invest in their education
- expand their roles
- protect their health and well-being

WHO also calls attention to the increasing scale of international health worker migration, especially from lower-income countries with fragile health systems, and the need for strengthened implementation of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel.

Health and care workers are essential contributors to the advancement of the European Programme of Work's core priorities. Their responsibilities in working towards universal health coverage, protecting more people against health emergencies, and promoting health and well-being for all at all ages must be acknowledged not only with praise, but also with tangible measures.

[Global WHO announcement – 2021 designated as the International Year of Health and Care Workers](https://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2021/01/2021-international-year-of-health-and-care-workers)

(source: WHO, Regional Office for Europe; available at: <<https://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2021/01/2021-international-year-of-health-and-care-workers>>)

## Projects

### EAEA Grundtvig Award 2021



Every year, [European Association for the Education of Adults] (EAEA) looks to adult education projects from Europe and further for their demonstrations of innovation and excellence. The EAEA Grundtvig Award highlights project results that produce new ideas, new partnerships, new methodologies and a new understanding of how we can work in adult education. This year's theme is digitalisation and democracy.

#### Theme: Digitalisation and Democracy

In light of all the recent events, the world is moving to a digital-first society, as relationships, institutions and workplaces are increasingly becoming mediated by technology. While digital technologies have the power to platform everyone, there is still a lot of work to be done towards representativeness, openness and transparency. The digital gap has acutely widened, exposing a large group of the population with little or no basic digital skills, access and opportunities.

#### Main aims:

- Develop strategies to better promote democracy and critical awareness, as well as media literacy as a core competence
- Close the opportunity gap by transforming how people access and experience digital learning
- Activate networks and partnerships of public, private and citizen organisations that promote democracy and participation in a digital context
- Support initiatives that foster political change through education by engaging learners, practitioners and organisations
- Further the development of the provider's own mission statement taking into account D&D



### How to apply?

You may submit a description of your programme in English. Entries must be received by filling in [the application form](#) for the Grundtvig Award up until **10 April 2021**. It is possible to send attachments (maximum file size 20 M) with the form, or you can send attachments by email. If you have any printed or similar evidence, please send it to:

EAEA

To the attention of Ms *Gina Ebner*  
Mundo-J

Rue de l'Industrie 10  
1000 Bruxelles

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact [christin.cieslak@eaea.org](mailto:christin.cieslak@eaea.org)

Read more about the Award [here](#).

- Promoting human relationships, global context and sustainable development
- Sustainable Development Goals in fostering human relationships
- Social policy to enhance human relationships
- Gender and minority issues, micro enterprise, and social inclusion and integration
- Challenges and capacities of Social Work Education and Research in promoting human relationships and future development

The conference promises excellent keynote lectures and presentations by prominent members of the social work and human service profession with more than 1,400 accepted abstracts. The Online conference and activities span three months and will require the collaboration and support from many organizations and colleagues from all over the world.

The conference kick-off has been recorded and videos are uploaded on the Conference site. You may freely access the recordings of the [Opening Plenary sessions](#).

The main conference scheduled for March 16-18 and **April 14-17, 2021** features live sessions as well as asynchronous presentations; with ample opportunities for discussions and networking. All registered presenters would receive a certificate of participation. A special discount of the registration fee is given to Members of IASSW and ICSW.

[Register for ISWED 2021](#) to join an enriching exchange of knowledge and experience aimed at co-creating a better tomorrow.

We at ICSW also urge you to encourage organisations you are connected in the fields of social welfare, social policy and social development to join ICSW as members to get connected with a global network dedicated to the cause of sustainable social development.

We look forward to your registration and support for this exciting conference and beyond.

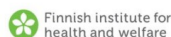
## Conferences/Expert Meetings



The **International Council for Social Welfare (ICSW)** along with the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) is pleased to invite you to join the **International Social Work and Development Conference (ISWED) 2021** in an attempt to bring together social workers, social development organisations and social policy practitioners to make an impact of the lives of people and societies in the midst of incredible changes that besets us.

The theme for the Online Conference is: **Human Relationship: Keys to Remaking Social Work for the Future**. The abstracts for the conference for presentations, the symposiums, workshops and poster sessions, all will highlight the following sub-themes:

## The Economy of Wellbeing: A Holistic Approach to achieve the Agenda 2030 goals



The UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD) 59<sup>th</sup> session Virtual Side Event took place on Thursday, **11 February 2021** from 8:30 to 9:45 EST (New York time).

Economy of Wellbeing (EoW) is a policy orientation and governance approach that places people and their wellbeing at the centre of policy and decision-making. EoW approach captures the mutually reinforcing interrelationships of individual well-being and economic growth, creating a virtuous circle that advances the goals and targets of Agenda 2030.

Organizing partners, the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN, New York, invited to listen to speakers from Europe, Africa and Asia, who explored the characteristics and conditions for EoW, linking it with the 'just transition to sustainable development'. ICSW cooperated in the conducting and reporting of this side event. The Report is attached with the e-mail distributing this Newsletter.

The full list of UN Commission for Social Development Side Events, 5-17 February 2021 is here: [Side Events – UNDESA Division for Inclusive Social Development | Teamup](#).

## Useful Links

SP's initial reaction to the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan:

<https://www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Social-Platform-initial-reaction-to-the-European-Pillar-of-Social-Rights-Action-Plan-1.pdf>

Social Platform Virtual Flagship conference:

<https://www.socialplatform.org/what-we-do/flagship-conference/flagship-conference-2021/#about2021>

AGE Platform Europe – The EU Green Paper on Ageing – access to the public consultation:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12722-Green-Paper-on-Ageing>

Global WHO announcement – 2021 designated as the International Year of Health and Care Workers:

<https://www.who.int/news/item/11-11-2020-2021-designated-as-the-international-year-of-health-and-care-workers>

EAEA Grundtvig Award 2021 – Application form:

<https://link.webpolsurveys.com/Participation/Public/c107f360-46e2-4e20-9358-0b3d40094768?displayId=Fin2197913>

International Social Work and Development Conference (ISWED) 2021:

<https://www.iassw-aiets.org/iswed-2021-online-conference/>

## Colophon

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

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

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

Contributions and comments can be sent to:

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