



December 2016



Season's Greetings and Happy New Year to our readers!

This December edition of the Global Cooperation Newsletter has been largely prepared by ICSW-Europe, reflecting its long-standing and immediate priorities. This edition continues to highlight the activities of ICSW in various regions of the world where we are working.

This Newsletter presents information on some institutions that are key to ICSW-Europe: European Platform for Social Cohesion, profiles of the AGE Platform Europe, as well as the European Social Platform. Some more recent activities, such as the expert group meeting on social protection assessment tools, are also discussed. As usual, in the "find of the month" section this edition includes information about some new resources of interest to our readers.

The contribution of Jean-Michel Hôte, the President Europe Ad Interim, is acknowledged in the preparation of all of the articles published in this edition.

Sergei Zelenev, ICSW Executive Director and Editor of the Global Cooperation Newsletter

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In this December edition of the Global Cooperation Newsletter the ICSW Europe is pleased to share a selection of information on European activities that may be of interest to the readership.

The annual general meeting of ICSW Europe was held in Prague on 27 May 2016 at the invitation of our Czech member, the Association of Citizens Advice Centers. It adopted a program of action for the period 2016-2020 in line with the priorities of the previous period: eradication of poverty, in particular among children and young people; international migration; social cohesion and the fight against segregation; and the ageing of the population and its consequences.

At the meeting, the Board was elected for a period of two years.

Since then, a new situation has emerged: the state of health of our President, Miloslav Hettes from Slovakia, has worsened to the point when during the summer he had to stop working.

I was nominated to replace him temporarily for a few months, and having that in mind, I wrote a short presentation, delivered at the Seoul Conference, in which he was able to participate. Further, in order to implement a project that Miloslav had conceived at the beginning of the year, the European Board, in agreement with the General Assembly, agreed to participate in a Conference to be held in Moscow on 18 and 19 May 2017 at the invitation of our new member from the Russian Federation, the Institute for Additional Professional Education of Workers for Social Services, organized on the theme "Human well-being, social cohesion and sustainable development: the quest for responses to contemporary challenges".

Please accept holiday greetings from the ICSW-Europe Board, consisting of Angela

Cepenaite (Lithuania), Joaquin Eguren (Spain), Annelise Murakami (Denmark), Britta Spilker (Germany), Ronald Wiman (Finland) and Gabriela Siantova (Slovakia), our editorial assistant responsible to the quarterly ICSW European Newsletter, who participated in the preparation of this edition.

Jean-Michel Hôte

Council of Europe: European Platform for Social Cohesion (PECS) - Strasbourg (France)

Created as an ad hoc committee in response to a request by several member countries, the European Platform for Social Cohesion is an intergovernmental structure aimed at keeping the issue of social cohesion at the forefront of the Council of Europe's priorities.

The Platform, attached to the Directorate General of Human Rights and the Rule of Law, has a two-year mandate (January 2016-December 2017).

It held its first meeting on 27 - 28 June 2016 and set up three working groups on the following themes:

- a) an integrated approach to social cohesion (including an analysis of that concept);
- b) an exchange on good practices and innovative approaches;
- c) examination of new trends and challenges.

In turn, the third working group seeks to deal with the following issues:

Protection and integration of migrants and refugees;

Access to social rights by vulnerable groups and young people;

Fight against poverty and exclusion; fight

against discrimination;

Integration of the gender perspective into the work.

A group of NGOs (including ICSW) with consultative status with the Council, known as the "Conference of NGOs", participates in the activities: ICSW Europe's French representative to the Conference, Gérard Schaefer, attended the meeting while his EASSW colleague, Robert Bergougnan, was attending the ICSW Conference in Seoul.

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Please recall that the question of social rights in Europe is covered by two reference texts: the European Social Charter (at the level of the Council of Europe) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights at the level of the European Union.

For further information: the minutes of the first meeting are available on the Council's website.

The second meeting of the Platform is scheduled for 19-20 September 2017.

Board Member, ICSW Europe

Experts' Meeting on social protection assessment tools

By Ronald Wiman, Board Member, ICSW Europe and Jean-Michel Hôte, Treasurer, Acting President, ICSW Europe

Social protection is a basic right. But only one out of four or five of the world's people has meaningful access to basic social protection. Particularly since the financial crisis of 2008, its role as an instrument for social and

economic development has been acknowledged. Evidence on the impacts of social protection systems, as a whole, is necessary to make a politically convincing business case for social protection, which all too often is conceived of or deliberately stamped as mere charity. Developing countries are now actively searching for feasible ways to make their social protection more systematic and sustainable.

Systematic evidence on the successes of social protection programmes has been accumulating rapidly, especially from the contexts of the poorer countries. ***"While there is plenty of research on the impact of individual programmes, evidence making the case for systems, or on how to build them, remains scarce."***

That is one of the conclusions drawn by Experts' Meeting on Social Protection Assessment Tools and Methodologies, hosted by the OECD in Paris, 13-14 October 2016. The organizer of the meeting was the EU Social Protection Systems Programme (EU-SPS), which is one of the Actions established by the EU Commission within its recent increase of investments in support of the development of social protection systems in developing countries. The EU-SPS was launched in 2014/15. It is funded by the EU, the OECD and the Government of Finland. The EU-SPS works with ten developing countries, supporting their efforts to systematize their social protection sector and to make the system more inclusive and sustainable.

Compiling and comparing good practices

The Experts' Meeting on Social Protection Assessment Tools and Methodologies brought together government representatives from the ten partner countries of the EU-Social Protection Systems Programme and key stakeholders who are currently or have been involved in social protection assessments. *The main objective of the meeting was to share*

experience and learning about countries' evidence needs for social protection systems-building, and to consider how social protection assessments might best address those needs.



Key messages from the report of the meeting.

The Meeting report summarizes the lessons learned as follows:

Evidence has played a critical role in driving the expansion of social protection schemes. The last two decades have seen a proliferation of social protection schemes across the developing world, in particular cash transfers. That growth has, in part, been driven by the increased use of impact evaluations to demonstrate the positive outcomes and cost-effectiveness of social protection in accelerating human development and reducing poverty.

To be useful to policymakers, assessments must be demand-driven and tailored to local context. It is important for practitioners to understand political processes around social protection reform, allowing them to carry out assessments at moments when evidence can make the most difference and align those assessments to countries' needs. Supply-driven assessments rarely generate the necessary engagement and buy-in from decision-makers to have a significant impact on policy. While standardized tools are an

excellent point of departure, policymakers find assessments to be most useful when they are tailored to local contexts and display an understanding of the political economy of social protection reform.

While there is plenty of research on the impact of individual programmes, evidence making the case for systems, or how to build them, remains scarce. Policymakers noted that it is difficult to make the case for building systems based on evidence about the impact of individual programmes. The process of system-building at the country level is fraught with difficulty: mandates and budgets tend to be spread across a range of institutions at different levels of government. Coordinating and aligning them requires political will and a clear plan. Some countries discussed their experience with formal coordination bodies that have been set up to spearhead multi-stakeholder processes.

Three areas were identified as critical for evidence generation to advance systematization efforts. First, in a climate of fiscal consolidation, policymakers stressed the need for a stronger "investment case" for social protection. Unpacking the linkages between social protection and inclusive growth is critical for continued investment in social protection. Second, countries expressed interest in evidence on models and strategies to finance social protection sustainably in the long run. Third, partner countries requested evidence on how to extend social protection coverage to the informal sector. Given that labour markets are likely to remain largely informal for the foreseeable future, pragmatic solutions are needed to extend coverage to informal sector workers.

Social protection assessments can build bridges between actors at the country level. Fragmentation between actors was highlighted as one of the principal stumbling blocks for system-building. An assessment often presents an opportunity to bring actors together around a common objective and can thus provide an important step towards system-building. Getting ministries of finance involved in those processes in order to link the assessment with fiscal and macroeconomic considerations was highlighted as important. Having an international partner facilitate that process can be helpful.

When assessing the impact of fiscal policy on poverty and inequality, the concept of net social protection is important. Net social protection reflects a combined analysis of the distributional effects of individual programmes and policy measures on both the tax and the expenditure sides of the fiscal framework. The Commitment to Equity (CEQ) Institute has developed a methodology for conducting such assessments, which is available as an open-source tool. The results provide insights for policy makers, multilateral institutions and nongovernmental groups when determining which changes in tax and spending policies will lead to greater equality and poverty reduction.

Social protection financing assessments should, where possible, include assessments of fiscal incidence. Fiscal incidence analysis is particularly relevant in the context of the Addis Action Agenda. In a context of declining aid budgets, there is an increasing emphasis on domestic resource mobilization to finance social spending in developing countries. This analysis demonstrates that countries need to be careful to assess the distributional impact of increased revenue mobilization so as to avoid increasing poverty and inequality.

The fragmentation of data sources and systems needs to be overcome. Better data and a harmonization of definitions are necessary so as to further improve the quality of assessments and, ultimately, of social protection policy-making. Fiscal incidence assessments, for example, rely on both administrative and household survey data. Reconciling the two is often challenging, as household surveys tend to underreport income and consumption at the top end of the income distribution. There is also a need for the harmonization of definitions – pension contributions, for example, can be treated as deferred income or as a cash transfer.

Assessments provide an opportunity to strengthen national data systems. Social protection assessments often use and generate useful data on individual social protection schemes and the broader system. That data is rarely fed back into national systems or international databases, which is a missed opportunity. The assessment process provides opportunities to work with local stakeholders and statistical offices to map existing data sources and identify opportunities for strengthening statistical systems. That will also be critical in enabling countries to report on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets related to social protection.

Social protection assessments should continue to evolve with the thinking about systems. By definition, systems aren't static but must continue to evolve in line with countries' development. So, too, should analytical approaches. The multi-sectoral nature of the SDG Agenda challenges social protection practitioners to better capture issues of policy coherence between sectors.

The EU Social Protection Systems Programme will take those messages on board for ongoing and future assessments. The EU-SPS will also continue

to contribute to the development and application of ISPA tools in its ten partner countries. Specific plans include contributing to the development of the planned social protection financing tool (including the CEQ methodology) and increased engagement on data for social protection systems.

The EU-SPS Programme

EU-SPS is an EU Initiative to facilitate the systematization of social protection in developing countries. At the same time it aims at deriving evidence for guidance for future investments in social protection in developing cooperation.

The Programme is currently working with ten partner countries – Cambodia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Togo, Viet Nam, and Zambia – in close partnership with national governments, social protection authorities, think tanks, other expert institutions and NGOs. In many of these countries EU-SPS works in close partnership with UN organizations, especially ILO and UNICEF. Recently, Germany joined the EU-SPS, making it a wider EU-SPS *Initiative* that is open to more EU Member States, as well.

The EU-SPS Programme is also expected to generate and elaborate evidence for preparing guidance for the broader development community on how best support the development of social protection systems with development cooperation instruments in developing country contexts. The programme collaborates closely with the agencies of the [Social Protection Inter- Agency Cooperation Board](#) (SPIAC-B) and the [Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessments](#) (ISPA), both at country level and globally. The ICSW has been an active member of the SPIAC-B.

The full report is available on the EU-SPS website www.thl.fi/eu-sps

AGE Platform Europe



AGE Platform Europe is an international not-for-profit association established in July 2001 under Belgian law by its founder members: Eurolink Age, EPSO, and FIAPA. The oldest European organisation acting in the field of ageing, Eurage, joined the association a few years later.

AGE is a European network which aims to give voice to and promote the interests of the 198 million citizens aged 50 + in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most. Through its 131 members (including 10 European-wide organisations), the network represents directly more than 40 million senior citizens across the EU.

The AGE mission is to promote older people's rights at the EU and international levels, and to support their dignity and their active and their active and social life.

AGE has three complementary types of activities: policy work, project work, and networking between its members and with its partners and contacts.

Its priorities are: anti-discrimination and equality; social protection, active citizenship.

Each year, AGE holds a General Assembly and issues a final declaration.

You will find below the declaration adopted by AGE GA on 17 November 2016.

For more information, just visit AGE website: age-plattform.eu

Seize the potential of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing to strengthen equality, fairness and cohesion across an ageing Europe!

AGE General Assembly 2016 Final Declaration

AGE Platform Europe members met at their 2016 General Assembly to call on European Institutions, EU Member States, local and regional authorities to use all relevant policy frameworks including at global level to address effectively age discrimination, while strengthening adequately the full spectrum of older people's rights.

Respect and enjoyment of human rights by everyone is a fundamental feature of our democratic societies. **The right to be respected and treated with dignity**, to take part and be included in society may look fairly natural to some people, but **can be a real challenge for some members of our ageing population**. This is all the more true in these tough economic times, when fundamental rights tend to be overshadowed by economic concerns. Older people should not be denied the opportunities to participate in society and benefit from economic and social developments. The significant social and economic contributions older people bring to our societies, to younger generations, to companies and to various intergenerational projects should be acknowledged.

The persistent economic and social crisis impoverishing whole groups of our societies, including older people, combined with the baby-boomers' demographic pressure, and most recently the refugee crisis, the growing fear of terrorist attacks, the referendum on UK membership in the European Union, should all lead the EU to reconsider its core objectives,

organisation and functioning.

For the benefit of today and tomorrow's older persons, AGE members reconfirm their commitment to support the EU to reconnect with its citizens and create a forward looking society where everyone has a role to play, is valued and supported to lead an active dignified life regardless of age, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation.

This requires adopting comprehensive, coordinated and progressive policies to address all aspects of population ageing, building on relevant existing initiatives, including the current review of the 2002 **Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA or Madrid Plan)**. Therefore we submit the following recommendations on what should be achieved to better protect the rights of older people in this time of complex institutional, social and economic contexts in the EU and at global level.

For the full text of the AGE General Assembly's recommendations, please see following pages.

[Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing must support the respect of human rights of older people](#)

Older people's rights are gaining momentum at the international level with the on-going debate on how to improve their protection on the ground, in particular through the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), the recommendation of the Council of Europe on the promotion of human rights of older persons; the work of the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Older Persons and the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing. AGE welcomes these

developments, but urges the European Union to build on this positive work-in-progress and to develop adequate mechanisms to promote and protect older people's rights. In the meantime, the MIPAA should be better used to monitor how far older people can equally enjoy their human rights and what is the real impact of the existing framework on their lives. Monitoring should be complemented by positive actions to empower older people to develop skills and knowledge necessary to exercise their active citizenship.

While the MIPAA is not a human rights instrument, it has the potential to address various challenges that older people face from their socio-economic activities to cultural, civic and political participation. Contrary to other existing policy process on ageing, the MIPAA contains a number of references relevant to the human rights of older people. However, despite that important progress, the MIPAA is neither comprehensive nor fully adequate to address older people's needs and protect their rights.

With a view to contributing to the 2017 review of the MIPAA Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) for Europe, AGE analysed the level of advancements in the implementation of the Plan at the subnational and national levels. Regretting the low-profile of the Plan within national policy agendas and the overall lack of involvement of older persons, their organisations or other relevant stakeholders (e.g. equality bodies, NHRIs, researchers, private sector) in this process, AGE General Assembly 2016 urges the European Union and national governments, in particular to:

- Increase awareness about the Plan and involve external actors, in particular older persons, in its implementation, monitoring and eventual reformulation of the objectives;
- Ensure that all current and future socio-economic reforms, in particular those taken in the framework of the European Semester pay due attention to their potential impact on vulnerable groups, help fight ageism in all areas of life, and ultimately allow older persons to live in dignity and participate equally in society;
- Recognise and address the particular challenges that older people across the EU face with regard to: adequate income to live in dignity; access to employment with support for life-long learning; social networks to fight loneliness and stimulate social participation; accessible, affordable and quality health and long-term care; and access to goods and services regardless of age criteria;
- Follow the recommendation of the UN Independent Expert on the rights of older persons calling for a new binding instrument, such as an international convention, to highlight the specific barriers that older people face in respect of their human rights while considering in what ways the existing UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities could already be applied to older people;
- Follow the recent call from the UNECE for active strategies to meet older migrants' economic, social and health-care needs –

in order to address the increasing international mobility and migration of people at an older age;

- Apply a rights-based approach to the implementation of all domains covered by the MIPAA in view of promoting and protecting the rights of older persons in all national plans, policies and laws;
- Use an evidence-based approach to policy-making on ageing and develop common indicators in the context of MIPAA objectives. Greater emphasis should be given to social, not only to economic indicators, and to the positive impact that social measures may have on the economy. Qualitative indicators should be promoted and complement quantitative indicators at national and EU levels to reflect a comprehensive and exhaustive definition and understanding of the notion of the quality of life across the life course.
- Mainstream in the implementation of the MIPAA the quantitative targets and indicators on social protection set by other policy frameworks, e.g. the Europe 2020 Strategy headline targets, the Active Ageing Index developed by the European Commission and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), or what will follow as proposals from the consultation on the EU Pillar of Social Rights;
- Promote the MIPAA to make it visible, transparent and connected to all relevant governmental actions and initiatives that impact Europe's ageing population and the

lives of older persons. That will increase ownership of the process among the relevant actors and facilitate its implementation at all levels;

- Introduce monitoring and accountability mechanisms in order to evaluate progress achieved across all MIPAA objectives and its Regional Implementation Strategy. Having made progress in some areas, the Plan's implementation has been very fragmented and uneven, and has not helped to achieve tangible results across all its objectives;

Remove barriers to the participation of older people and their organisations in the monitoring and implementation of the Plan (via more transparency and a genuine consultation mechanism) with a view to using its full potential to build consensus among all stakeholders on how to create an inclusive society for all ages. That should ensure that persons are able to age with security and dignity and continue to participate in society as citizens with full rights.

AGE Platform Europe and its members commit to engage in a constructive dialogue with the European Union and their respective national governments and authorities to carry out the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

Social Platform: the largest NGO platform in Europe



Social Platform covers a large spectrum of the EU

social civil-society sector and is the largest platform of NGOs in Europe. Formed in 1995, it has seen its membership grow from 20 at the beginning to 48 at present.

*Its members represent more than 2800 national organisations, associations or other voluntary groups at the local, regional and national levels in the EU. **ICSW is a member of SP through ICSW Europe.***

Its aim is to promote social justice, equality and participatory democracy by voicing the concerns of its members, who are involved in its work programme mainly through what are called "Task Forces" (TFs).

*The TFs are focused on **five main domains**: Civil Dialogue and Social Justice; Social Standards; Access to Services; Human Rights; Funding. For example, Social Standards cover matters such as employment and inclusion; Access to Services deals with topics such as social and health services or social economy; Human Rights advocacy focuses on migration and solidarity with migrants, equality and non-discrimination in society.*

***Some ICSW Europe members** (Germany, Austria, Finland, Denmark from now on) were and are still active in those TFs: especially Social Standards and Human Rights. According to its 2014-2020 strategic orientation, Social Platform's latest GA on 27 October 2016 has decided to promote a 2017-2020 programme, which is summarized in the following text (abstract of the full 15-page document).*

For more information, see the SP website at socialplatform.org

"The richness of the membership upon which

Social Platform is built does not prevent it from having a unique identity of its own. On the contrary, rather than focusing on differences, Social Platform enables civil society organisations to nurture those elements that bring us together. Our shared belief that the EU's policies should be based on respect for human rights and our common vision for a socially just, sustainable and cohesive EU are principles that have seared into our genetic makeup the idea that Social Platform is more than the sum of its parts – and that out of many, we are truly one.

This plan sets out the strategic actions for Social Platform for the four-year period 2017-2020. It is designed to be broad enough to foster ownership among all members, yet be sufficiently specific to frame and organise our work consistently so as to have a tangible impact. As such, it forms the basis of the activities that we undertake as part of our annual work programmes for the same period.

The strategic plan builds upon the **strategic orientation 2014-2020**¹, which defines our future direction through **six objectives**, all of which embrace the promotion of human rights and reflect the work of our members²: people-centred services, socio-economic justice, equality for all, quality employment, social protection, and civil dialogue. By identifying relevant and impactful actions that take into account the current political climate, the strategic plan encompasses these objectives and outlines concrete ways in which we can advance them. As such, it will allow us to set our common values and vision as the silver thread running through all our activities.

¹ See [Social Platform's strategic orientation](#).

² See more about our members [here](#).

Specifically, the strategic plan consists of **four strategic actions**:

- "Leaving no one behind" encompasses equality for all and access to people-centred services.
- "A just economy" addresses socio-economic justice, quality employment, as well as the financing of our social protection systems.
- "Building bridges" promotes active engagement in a constructive civil dialogue with key stakeholders at the EU and grassroots levels.
- Finally, "Strengthening the capacity of our network" lays the essential foundations that will allow us to achieve our strategic priorities.

To achieve our four strategic actions, we will make use of appropriate EU and international processes and instruments – such as the Europe 2020 and 2030 strategies, the **Sustainable Development Goals**, the European Pillar of Social Rights or the the European Semester – with the intent to make progress on our own agenda for the EU.

We believe that, by engaging with decision-makers and people in the EU to make the case for policies based on a human and fundamental rights approach, we can help reduce inequalities and steer the EU towards a socially, economically and environmentally prosperous future, and by doing so, help reconcile it with what truly matters – the people of Europe."

Upcoming Moscow Conference 2017

ICSW Europe Board met Russian partners in Vienna (Austria, November 11-12, 2016) to discuss the preparations for and the



Organisation of the international conference that is going to take place in Moscow (Russian Federation) on **18-19 May, 2017**.

The Russian partners were represented by **Evdokiya I. Kholostova** – Director of the *Institute for Additional Professional Education of Workers for Social Services*; **Irina V. Mkrtumova** – Deputy Director of Research, and **Natalia F. Rigina** – Head of the International School of Social Work, both from the above-mentioned Institute; Igor V. **Kulikov** – the Adviser of the Department of

Labour and Social Protection of the Population of Moscow; and **Olga E. Gracheva** – the First Deputy of Head of the Department of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of Moscow.

The theme of the conference is: **"Human well-being, social cohesion and sustainable development: the quest for responses to contemporary challenges"**.



For the conference in Moscow 2017 ICSW Europe is cooperating with Russian partners – Institute for Additional Professional Education of Workers for Social Services (http://skts.sk/clanky/konferencia_moskva/presentation_Moscow.pdf) and the Department of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of Moscow.

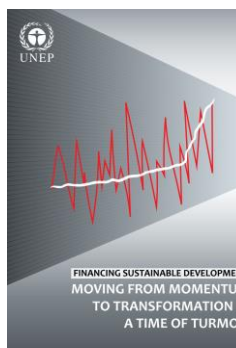
More information about the upcoming conference will be available in the next ICSW Europe Newsletter issues.

(by Gabriela Siantova – ICSW Europe Newsletter editor)

Useful resources and links—the finds of the month

Financing sustainable development: Moving from momentum to transformation in a time of turmoil, UNEP, 2016, 20p.

Unlocking finance for sustainable development is a challenge for our times that must be addressed. Financing Sustainable Development: Momentum to Transformation highlights real options to do just that.



For more information: http://unepinquiry.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Financing_Sustainable_Development_Momentum_to_Transformation.pdf

Older citizen monitoring: Achievements and learning, HelpAge International, London, 2016, 30 p.

Older citizen monitoring is a social accountability tool and a process that promotes dialogue between older people, civil society organisations, governments and service providers.



Older citizen monitoring:
Achievements and learning



at the grass-roots level monitor their access to the services that they are entitled to and lobby for improvements. The present report reviews the HelpAge network's experience since 2002.

For more information: <http://socialprotection.org/discover/publications/older-citizen-monitoring-achievements-and-learning>

Letter from the ICSW President.

Dear members and friends!

As the year is coming to its close, I would like to send greetings to you all. It is difficult to say that it has been a good or a peaceful year. We are all aware that a war is going on in the Middle East, and innocent people are dying as a result of attacks on civilians. We are aware of children who are hungry or are starving to death. Our generation has access to so much information that we should know better and should work to bring an end to all suffering. Let us hope that all this knowledge is not wasted and that 2017 will be a better year.

What this year brought to ICSW?

We have a new President, and Michael Cichon has been succeeded by me, Eva Holmberg Herrström.

Thank you, Michael, for your dedicated work for ICSW over the past four years!

This year we had a Joint World Conference of ICSW, IASSW and IFSW in Seoul, Republic of Korea. It was a well-organized, very successful conference that brought together more than 2,500 participants.

In the fall, we have increased our membership: new members joined, and old members have come back. In 2017, I want to strengthen our members' influence on the global program and global activities. The activities should demonstrate our diversity. I think we need to focus on one area at a time. Therefore, in December you will receive a questionnaire that focuses on issues of gender equality and reducing violence against women. That survey will then be continued with a focus on other areas that we are working on. The idea of the survey is to gain a foundation of solid knowledge for the debate and to point to where the welfare deficiencies are found, putting emphasis on pursuing active socio-economic policy. The knowledge will be built on the experience of our members. Hopefully, most of you will answer the questions by 31 January 2017.

During 2017, we plan a new media policy, including better use of social media. We hope that you, our members, will become active participants in the debate on social media.

Next year, several regional conferences are scheduled. I hope that you will have an opportunity to attend those events so as to share your knowledge and make new contacts. I will participate in some of them. It is important to me to have an opportunity to meet you and have a dialogue with you.

Hoping to meet many of you over the next year, I wish you all

A Happy New Year

Eva Holmberg Herrström
LL.M.
President ICSW

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