

Eco-wisdom for social workers, leaving no one behind

In this document you find a short report on the activities since the DM May 2023 in Prague.

After we had all kinds of on-line meetings with a smaller network group, consisting of participants from Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Denmark and The Netherlands, we see progress and at the other hand we see that the awareness among social workers is still to be enhanced. Experiences are shared, like the success of common gardening with the support of community work, the social work support for the struggle of Sami about their land, and lots of energy-shortage and fair transition projects. Some national associations are developing policies on eco-social work, like publications in Norway and Sweden, the BASW statement, the establishing of a network in Denmark, a project with an important paper about cooperation with research and education in Spain, a special edition of the SW magazine in Austria, and a practical guide in Portugal. We think that national associations could be encouraged to do more, and/or can make good use of experiences elsewhere and/or support from IFSW Europe.

On the DM May 2023 in Prague we worked together to get more focus on the issues of importance. We had an excellent key-note by Dr Richard de Brabander at the conference, a well visited session at the Conference with 5 interesting presentations, and a workshop on eco-social wisdom.

In October 2023 we had a vibrant discussion in a webinar with the colleagues of Malta. The WSWD 2024 was dedicated to eco-social thinking / buen vivir, most countries devoted each in their own way WSWD to this theme. We had a very successful 2-day seminar in Rotterdam 'on the way to Oslo 2025' in June 2024, and a presentation and workshop at the BASW conference in Edinburgh in the same month. The activities of IFSW Europe have been reported in the United Nations network Harmony with Nature annual report September 2024. In September 2024 I had a workshop on ecological justice on a Dutch-Flemish conference in Rotterdam.

In the UK and in The Netherlands research has been done by BASW and BPSW (the latter in cooperation with others) into the state of awareness among social workers, and how they think they can include eco-social thinking in their daily work. In Poland a survey among students has been done and the education commission is working on a research among students based upon the results of other surveys.

This is just a glimpse of what have been done and of what is going on.

Concluding:

- the interest in eco-social work is growing, the awareness of the urgency is there. There is a growing amount of good practices all over Europe. What remains is, that social workers who are not involved in community work see little possibilities to include the ecosocial orientation in their work.
- Natural disasters in Europe, esp. storms, fires and floodings, ask for more preparedness as social workers
- There is a growing, mainly informal network.

For the DM to discuss these three themes, and come up with recommendations for the last year of this project.

In Oslo 2025 we will have the final report of this project, that most certainly will leave room for new plans and ideas. One of the questions is: do we want to consolidate the network, if so, how could that be done and who will be the lead.

September 2024, Josien Hofs