



# Strengthening social services at the local level

challenges, innovations, and lessons learned

## Seminar 4.

# Harnessing the power of human resources in social services



**WORLD BANK GROUP**  
Social Protection

# BBL exchange series

The Social Protection in Europe and Central Asia unit at the World Bank is organizing a BBL exchange series to share lessons learned and best practices for addressing key challenges and strengthening social services at the local level.

The sessions will be structured around four main topics:

- 1 planning of social services
- 2 financing and innovation
- 3 provision of social services
- 4 workforce



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## Seminar 4.

### Recruitment and retention of social services in Europe *A general assessment*

Irene Bertana, EASPD



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Social Protection



## Irene Bertana

*EASPD Senior Policy Officer  
and Parliament Liaison*

With extensive experience in the disability field, she focuses on deinstitutionalisation, inclusive living, and early childhood intervention, currently serving as facilitator of the EASPD Member Forum on Inclusive Living and organising the conference “Empowering families, enabling self-determination: rethinking support at every life stage” to be held in October 2025.



# EASPD - European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities

- European Non-governmental umbrella organisation
- Active since 1996
- Representing over 22.000 services
- 180 members from 47 different countries
- Represents disability service providers towards EU institutions
- UNCRPD as a compass / cooperation with UN



# Social Services in the EU: Definition

## Aims:

- Response to vital human needs, particularly of individuals in vulnerable situations, e.g. children, older persons, persons with disabilities, people at risk or experiencing poverty and social exclusion, homeless people, migrants and asylum seekers...
- Provide protection risks of life and assist in personal challenges or crises
- Provided to families in support to their caring role
- Safeguard of fundamental human rights, human dignity, non-discrimination, and creation of equal opportunities for all
- Preventive and socially cohesive role

## Organisation:

- Relational and person-centred
- User diversity
- Locally tailored
- Flexible
- Solidarity based and publicly funded
- Not-profit and volunteer involvement



## Social Services in the EU

- It directly employs almost 11 million staff in Europe = **representing 4,7 % of the total EU workforce.**
- Together with health services, social Services: **7% of the total EU economic output**
- **Growing demand** (ageing population, higher rates of disability, change in family patterns, labour mobility)
- **Growing sector** (+2 million jobs in the past 10 years)
- Highly **gendered** sector
  
- However, there are **staff shortages**, with recruitment and retention issues



# Lack of Attractiveness of Social Services

## Key Issues

- Working conditions
- Image of the sector
- Occupational Safety and Health
- Career development
- Migrant workforce and “care drain”
- Care in underserved and rural areas, and in big cities



	Opportunities	Risks
Digitalisation & AI	More efficient and accessible services, reach to underserved areas	Exclusion of users, need for staff training
Non-standard Work	Flexibility, lower costs	Job insecurity, high turnover, reduced quality
Outsourcing	Cost savings, specialisation	Risks for accountability, quality, and employment rights
Decentralisation	Tailored, responsive services	Inequity, inconsistent standards
New Funding Models	Innovation, performance-driven	Metric-driven behavior, inequality



- **Quality insurance**
- **person-centred and human-rights based approach**
- **De-institutionalisation:** Shift from large segregating institutional care to home and community-based care and support (deinstitutionalisation)
  - Homecare
  - Day care
  - Personal assistance
  - Respite care, supported living
  - Integrated housing services and family-type and -size residential settings

## IMPACT ON

- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TRAINING & RESKILLING



# Building the attractiveness of jobs

## Social Dialogue & policy frameworks

- Working conditions
  - Work-life balance
  - Gender balance
  - Decent work / tackle precariousness
  - Better working conditions for migrant workers (recognition of qualifications, undeclared work)
- Prevention of burnout and MSD

## Career Paths and Re- and Up-skilling of workers

- Training & LLL
- Career development
- Quality / person-centred / human-rights based support
- Leverage potential of new technologies

## Information and promotional campaigns

- Make social services more visible to the general public
- Meaningful career
- Diverse skills, profiles & perspective
- Rights-based approach
- Increase gender balance



# Some examples



- It is a skill partnership & project
- It focuses on reskilling on digitalisation & person-centred support
- It identifies LTC skill needs
- It provides training and EU-certified curricula
- It will produce a EU Skills Strategy and Sustainability Plan



- It is a CERV project
- It focuses on gender equality in care
- It strengthens skills of employers and workers on inclusive practices
- It challenges stereotypes and promotes care as valuable work
- Its results include training, tools, and policy recommendations for change



EUROPEAN CARE CERTIFICATE

- It is a EU qualification
- It covers the basic knowledge required to work in a health and social care setting



- It is an Horizon project
- It focuses on wellbeing of workers & informal carers
- It identifies Good practices
- It creates learning networks & national pilots of methodologies
- It will produce Policy recommendations





THANK YOU!

## Resources

Recruitment and Retention in European Social Services, EPSU, Social Employers, 2020

[https://www.socialemployers.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/SEM-001-20-position-paper\\_screen-VS3.pdf](https://www.socialemployers.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/SEM-001-20-position-paper_screen-VS3.pdf)

Staff Matters: Disability workforce of tomorrow, EASPD, 2019

<https://knowledgehub.easpd.eu/local/dlotcms/resources.php?id=610>

Use of Artificial Intelligence in social care for persons with disabilities, EASPD, 2024

[https://easpd.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Report\\_Use\\_of\\_Artificial\\_Intelligence\\_in\\_social\\_care\\_for\\_persons\\_with\\_disabilities\\_-\\_Final\\_final.pdf](https://easpd.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Report_Use_of_Artificial_Intelligence_in_social_care_for_persons_with_disabilities_-_Final_final.pdf)



# Strengthening social services at the local level

challenges, innovations, and lessons learned

## Seminar 4.

**Keep it small and keep it  
simple: the neighborhood as  
ecosystem for integrated  
healthcare**

**Jos de Blok, Buurtzorg**



**WORLD BANK GROUP**  
Social Protection



## Jos de Blok

*CEO, Buurtzorg*

Jos de Blok is the founder and CEO of Buurtzorg (neighborhood nursing). de Blok developed a pioneering approach within the Dutch healthcare system, creating Buurtzorg which is a transformational model of collaborative, patient-centric community care. Buurtzorg is now active in 25 countries. De Blok received The Albert Medal of the Royal Society of Arts (UK) in 2014.

# Keep it small and keep it simple: the neighborhood as ecosystem for integrated healthcare



Strengthening social services  
at the local level



**BUURTZORG**

Jos de Blok



social healthcare



focus on relationships



solutions instead of  
indications



separated care and back  
office processes



buurtzorgweb- and square,  
knowledge, information,  
communication



scale of the  
neighborhood

- Starting an organization and care delivery model for community care with:
- **independent teams** up to 12 nurses
- Working in a neighborhood of 5.000-10.000 people
- Teams responsible for the organization and the **complete process**



# BUURTZORG 2007 - NOW

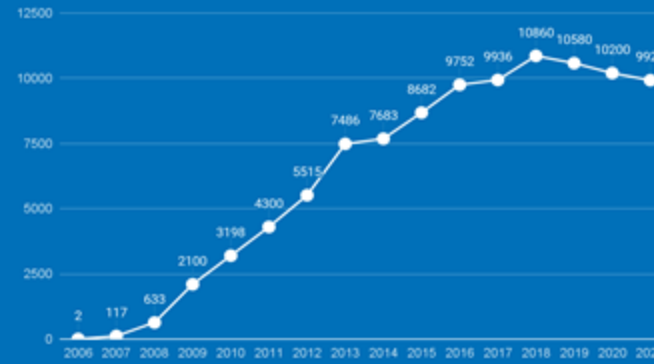


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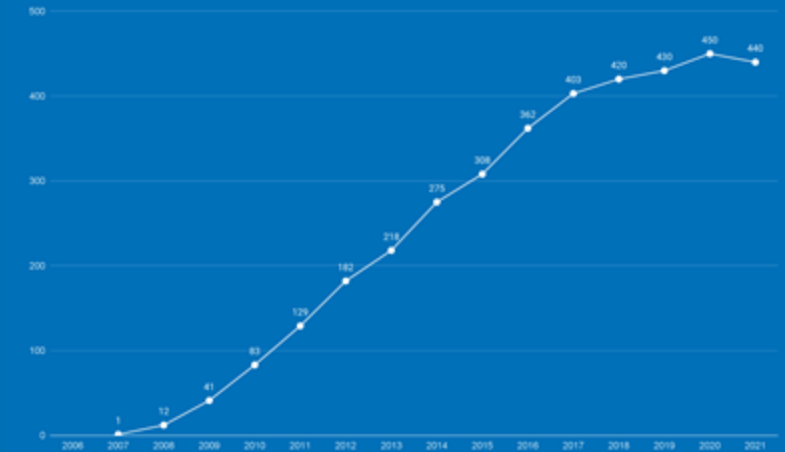
## TEAMS



## NURSES



## TURNOVER



100 new nurses a month

100.000 + patients a year

510.000.000 turnover a year

15.000 nurses and careworkers

15.000 verpleegkundigen en verzorgenden

50 backoffice

21 coaches

2 directeuren

# AN EXTRA EXISTING ORGANIZATION...



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## BUURTDIENSTEN

Neighborhood Services

since 2016

4000 extra colleagues

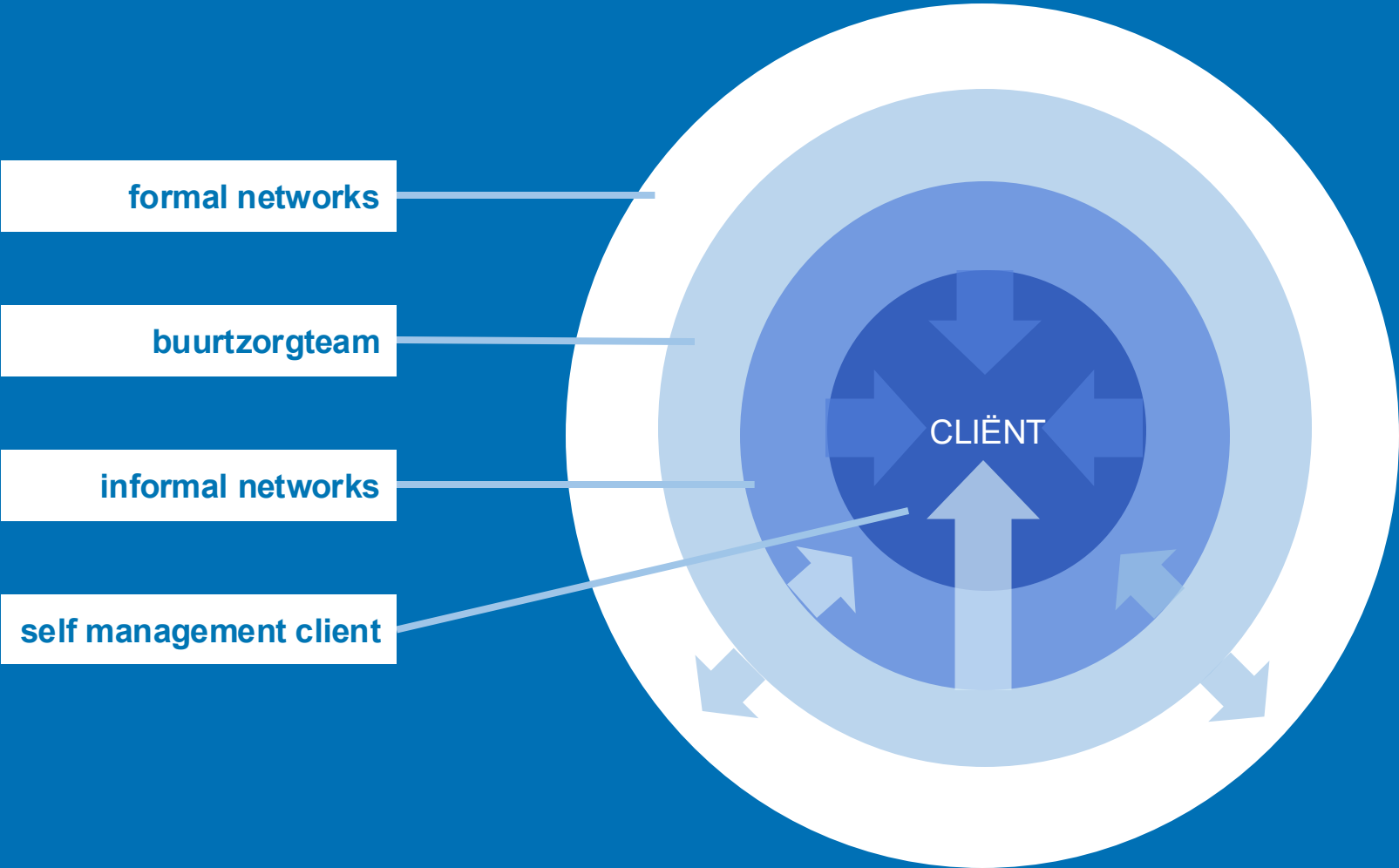
successful

BUURTZORG

# ONION MODEL



Strengthening social services at the local level



inside out | empowering and adaptive | network creating | supporting | additional | replacement



Neighborhood ...



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**BUURTDIENSTEN**

Services

**BUURTWONEN**

Living

**BUURTZORG JONG**

Care for young

**BUURTZORG KRAAM**

Care for maternity

**STICHTING MAJA**

**BUURTZORGPENSION**

**BUURTZORG+**

**BUURTZORGHUIS**

Care Home

**BUURTZORGT**

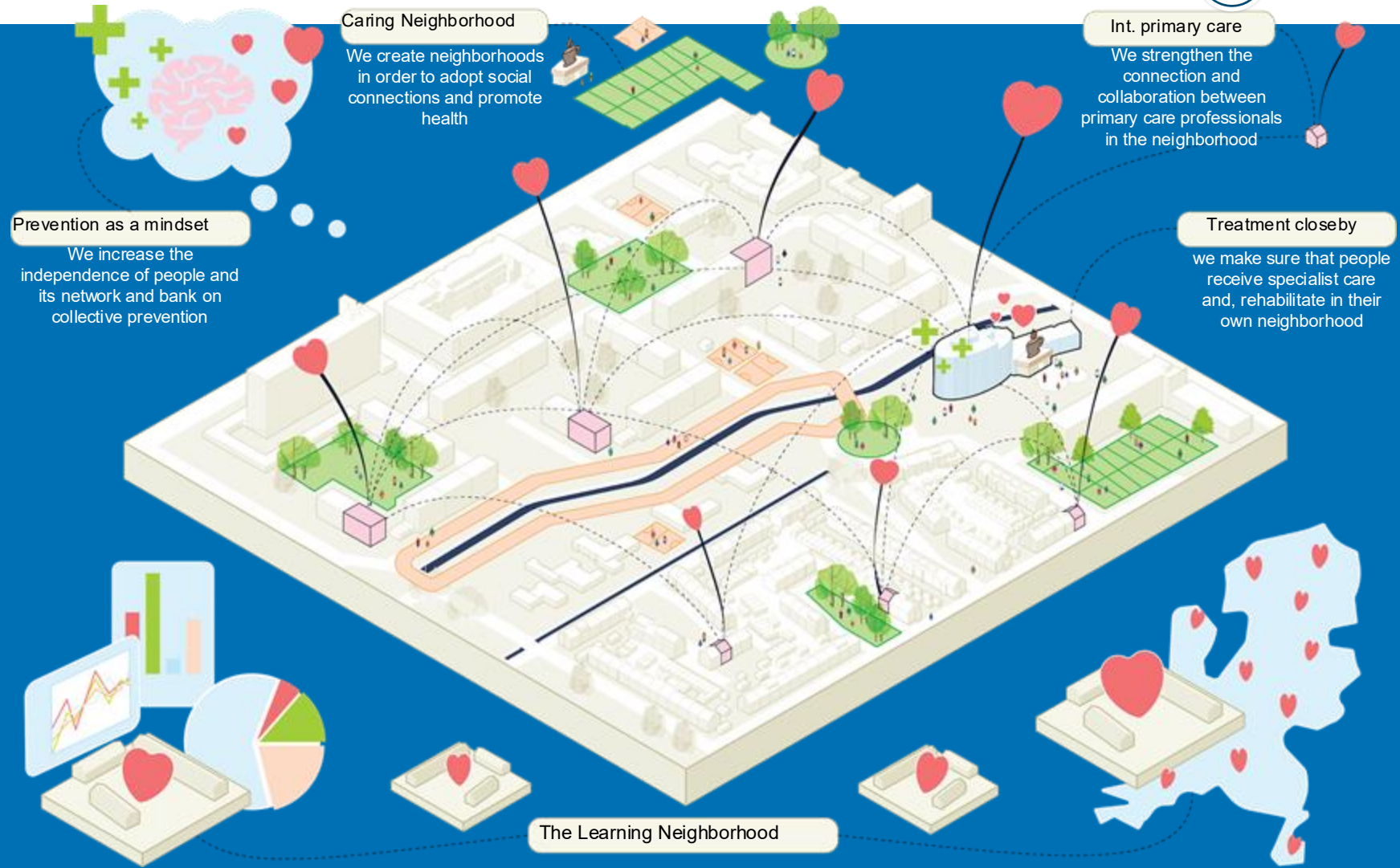
**BUURTZORG**



# Our future vision



Strengthening social services at the local level



### Caring Neighborhood

We create neighborhoods in order to adopt social connections and promote health

### Int. primary care

We strengthen the connection and collaboration between primary care professionals in the neighborhood

### Prevention as a mindset

We increase the independence of people and its network and bank on collective prevention

### Treatment closeby

we make sure that people receive specialist care and, rehabilitate in their own neighborhood

### The Learning Neighborhood

We ensure that we gain better insight at the neighborhood level into what we do and what it yields. This creates a network of knowledge exchange between neighborhoods so that



# Vision and underlying themes of our transition plan



Strengthening social services at the local level

Overarching themes



**Vision: The neighborhood as an ecosystem for social care. Healthcare in the neighborhood, small scale, simple, and integral. Starting from the person and together with their network. Trust and human connection as the foundation.**



The caring neighborhood

How do we design neighborhoods so that social connectedness is created and health is stimulated?



The learning neighborhood

How do we ensure that we have a better understanding on the neighborhood level of what we are doing and what we



Prevention mindset

How do we strengthen the resilience of people and their networks, and focus on collective prevention?



Connected 1<sup>st</sup> line

How do we strengthen the connection and collaboration between primary care professionals in the neighborhood?



Treatment close by

How do we ensure that people receive specialist treatment and rehabilitation in the neighborhood?

# With our transition, we are aiming on different patterns



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## From organisational focused care system

Fragmented system



Separation of activities/ more specialists



Focus on cure



Transactional care



Efficient and task-oriented work



Hierarchical separation of thinking/doing



Focus on client-satisfaction



## ...towards social care

Care is integrated, holistic and client-centered

Simplification by integration of care activities

Movement towards prevention

Relational care

Focus on outcomes

Self-management/autonomy for professionals

Increasing problem solving capacity client and network



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KEEP IT

SMALL

KEEP IT

simple



# Strengthening social services at the local level

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Seminar 4.

**Akademija**  
SOCIJALNE SKRBI

Marija Lukec Presker, Deputy Director



**WORLD BANK GROUP**  
Social Protection



## Marija Lukec Presker

### *Assistant Director*

She graduated from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, majoring in behavioral disorders and after years in education in various professional roles, she started working at the then social welfare center where she worked at the Department for Children, Youth and Family for seven years.

After the Social Welfare Center, she worked as the head of the Service for the Protection of Children, Youth and Family at the Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social Policy for three years, during which she participated in the work of various working and advisory groups, and mostly dealt with the topics of child protection, especially unaccompanied children, victims of human trafficking, gender-based violence and domestic violence.

From April 1, 2024 at the Academy of Social Welfare.



# Social Welfare System in the Republic of Croatia

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- Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy
- Academy of Social Welfare
- Croatian Institute for Social Welfare
- Family Center
- Special Guardianship Centre



## **Social welfare activities are performed by:**

1. Social welfare institutions:
  - Croatian Institute for Social Welfare
  - Family Center
  - Social Welfare Home and
  - Home Help Center
2. local and regional self-government unit, i.e. the City of Zagreb
3. NGOs, religious community and other legal entity
4. natural person
5. foster family



## SOCIAL WELFARE HOMES

A social welfare home can be established as:

1. Center for Education
2. Rehabilitation Center
3. Community Service Center
4. Adult home
5. Home for the elderly.



# 8500 Professional and other workers in the social welfare system

## Rules on Criteria for the Provision of Social Services

**PROFESSIONAL WORKERS** - social workers, lawyers, psychologists, social pedagogues, educational-rehabilitators and others - form the basis of professional staff in the social welfare system (these are experts who have completed undergraduate and graduate university studies, passed the professional exam and the approval of the competent chamber for independent work according to special regulations)

**OTHER PROFESSIONAL WORKERS** - educator for children up to 3 years of age, sign language instructor, sports instructor, midwife and others.

**OTHER WORKERS** - assistant in the shelter, family associate, work instructor, cook, geronto-housekeeper, other workers who perform other auxiliary and technical tasks and more.

Through the work of the Academy and the implementation of project activities, the training system for social welfare professionals will undergo significant changes that include:

- Decentralization of education.
- Systematic collection of training needs and evaluation of implemented training programs
- Improving the quality of the program
- Increasing flexibility in participation.



# Regulated professions and promotions

**REGULATED PROFESSIONS:** social worker, psychologist, social pedagogue, educational-rehabilitator, psychotherapist

- The Duty of Short Training.
- The license (self-employment permit) is valid for 6 years.
- The Chambers monitor the status of points (hours of training) and the fulfillment of other professional obligations.

Professional workers in the field of social welfare can be promoted to the title of mentor or advisor

- One of the conditions they must meet is professional development in social welfare activities lasting at least 100 or 150 hours, (depending on the type of status they wish to achieve) in the last five years before applying for promotion.



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at the local level

# The academy for social welfare



## VISION

To become the starting point for initial and continuous training and empowerment of professionals in the field of social welfare, with an emphasis on strengthening their professional and personal competencies in everyday challenges.

**Akademija**  
SOCIJALNE SKRBI



## MISSION

Continuous training of professionals in the field of social welfare with the aim of continuous professional empowerment and strengthening of competencies.



# Activities of the Academy

- **Implementation of standardization of training programs** at the Academy that are not harmonized with the Croatian Qualifications Framework
- **Organization and implementation of initial and continuous training** of professional and other employees of the Institute, Family Centre, Centre for Special Guardianship, social service providers in the field of social welfare
- **Organization and implementation of professional development of directors** in the social welfare system, other participants in proceedings conducted by the Institute, family mediators
- **Organization and implementation of supervision in the social welfare system**
- **Evaluation of the training program** and the work of lecturers at the Academy
- **Procedures of promotion to the title of mentor and advisor**
- **Cooperation with other bodies**, institutions, higher education institutions, associations, chambers, foundations and other legal entities.



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# ACHIEVED IN 2024

# Achieved in 2024



## EVENTS

*681 participants*



## SUPERVISION

*546 participants*



## PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

*501 participants*



# 1728



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# ACHIEVED AND PLANNED IN 2025

# Achieved and planned in 2025

✓ **PROFESSIONAL TRAINING**  
*1040 participants*

✓ **SUPERVISION**  
*400 participants*

✓ **EVENTS**  
*1550 participants*

✓ **WORKING MEETINGS**  
*748 participants*



# 3738



## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS, WORKSHOPS, WORKING MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES IN 2025



**1346**



## 2 EVALUATION TOOLS

Development of evaluation tools that are necessary for monitoring and evaluation of training and supervision programs.

## 28 FINAL REPORTS

Preparation of 19 final evaluation reports after the implementation of training programmes, 8 final reports after the implementation of training programmes in accordance with the CROQF and 1 final report after the supervision evaluation has been carried out.



# Promotion to the title mentor/advisor

## 198 REQUESTS FOR PROMOTION

Since the beginning of the Academy's work until today, a total of 198 requests for promotion/renewal of promotion to the title of mentor/advisor have been received.

To date, a total of 157 requests have been resolved, of which 22 for advisors and 135 for the Mentor.



## SIGNING OF THE GRANT AGREEMENT

With the signing of the grant agreement from the ESF+, the implementation of the project aimed at improving expertise and capacities in the field of social welfare begins.

**TOTAL CONTRACTED AMOUNT:  
16,000,000.00 EUROS**

## IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Implementation of project activities as part of a project financed by the ESF+, which includes a number of initiatives aimed at improving the professional knowledge and skills of employees in the social welfare system.



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**Thank you for  
your attention!**

**Dr. Natia Partskhaladze**

Global Social Service Workforce Alliance

Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

**13 MAY, 2005**



**Our mission as the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance is to promote and strengthen the social service workforce to provide services when and where they are most needed, alleviate poverty, challenge and reduce discrimination, promote social justice and human rights, and prevent and respond to violence and family separation.**

## Our Approach is to:



Serve as a convener for an **inclusive, global network** of stakeholders to create a forum for **discourse and collective learning**.



**Generate knowledge and build the evidence base** for effective social service workforce strengthening by developing and sharing research, resources, tools, models and best practices.



**Build the capacity** of national governments and humanitarian and development actors to implement strategies to strengthen the social service workforce.



**Promote effective advocacy** and stimulate an active network of workforce strengthening advocates.



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at the local level



# DEFINING THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE

- The social service workforce is an inclusive concept referring to a broad range of **governmental and nongovernmental professionals and paraprofessionals** who work with **children, youth, adults, older persons, families and communities** to ensure healthy development and well-being.
- They provide **preventive, responsive & promotive services** and operate at **macro, mezzo & micro** levels.

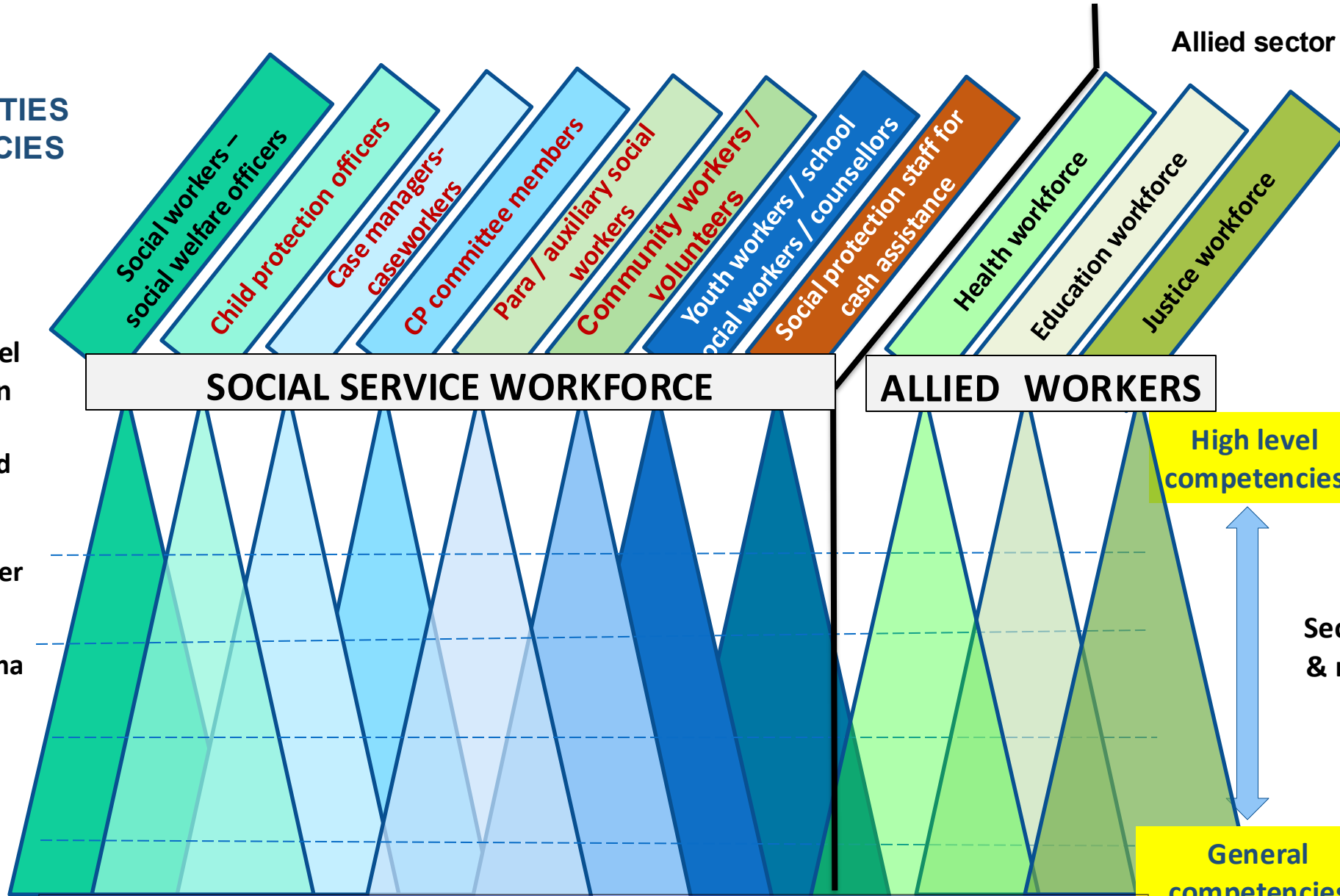


**SSW ROLES RESPONSIBILITIES & COMPETENCIES**

**Allied sector roles**

**Professional Level and Qualification**

- 4 Manager / advanced specialist
- 3 Specialist practitioner - advanced degree
- 2 Practitioner - diploma
- 1 Para professional
- 0 Trained volunteer



**SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE**

**ALLIED WORKERS**

**High level competencies**

**General competencies**

**Complex specialist services**

**Secondary preventive & responsive services**

**Primary / universal preventive services**

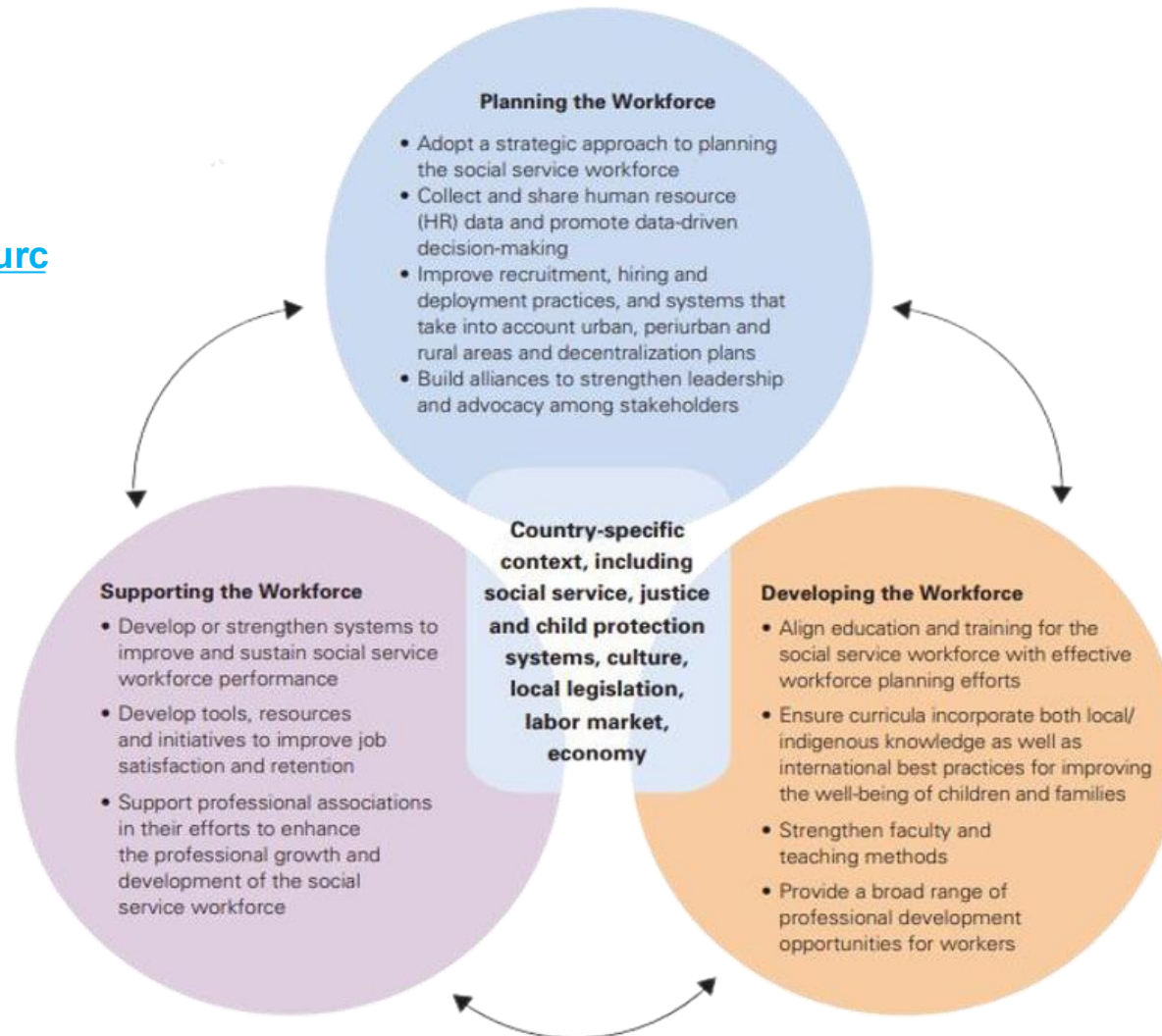
**Core Competencies, including:**

- \* Interpersonal communication - building trust with children & families
- \* Assessment
- \* Rights-based, strengths-based, social ecological approaches

# GSSWA FRAMEWORK FOR STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE

To access these and other Alliance resources:

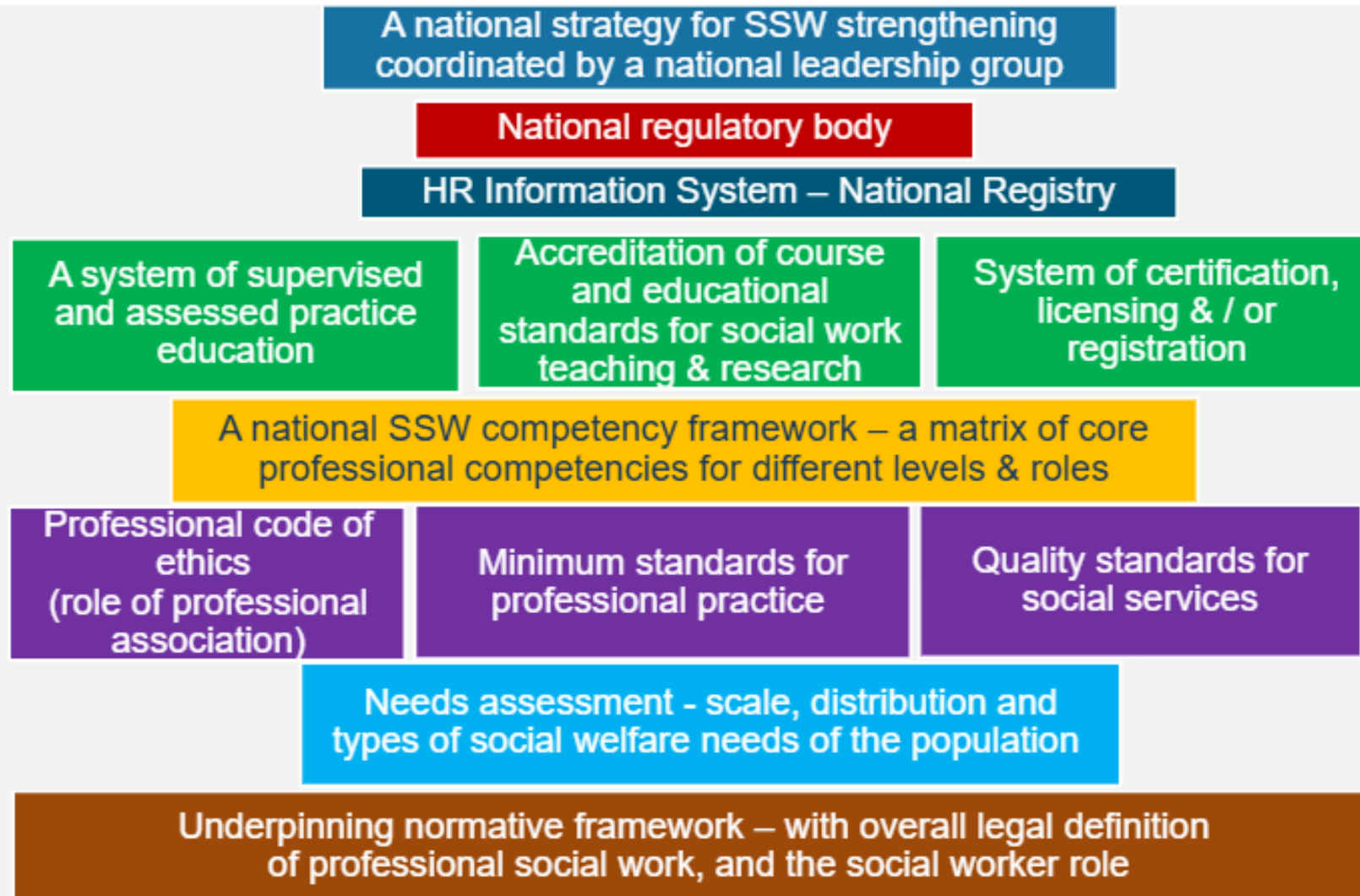
<https://socialserviceworkforce.org/resources-overview/alliance-resources/>



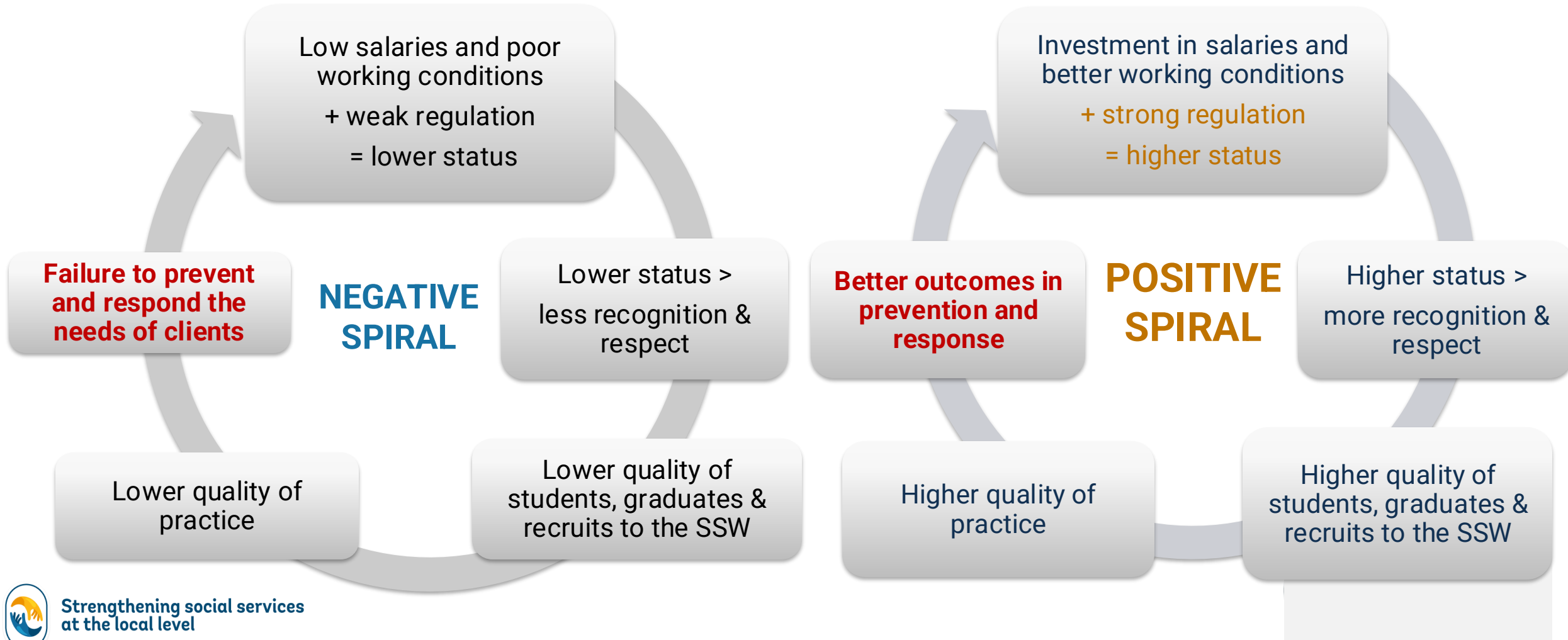
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# BUILDING BLOCKS OF A QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE SSW



# Recognizing and INVESTING in the workforce Is the KEY to ACHIEVING Positive OUTCOMES FOR CLIENT GROUPS





***“No system can function effectively without the individuals who make that system come to life.”***



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