



## ECDN Newsletter – October to December 2019

Dear members of the ECDN, Christmas is upon us and another three months have passed since our last Newsletter. It has been some interesting months with a lot of international conferences all across Europe both at the EAPN and Finance Watch in Brussels and MABS in Ireland, but also our very own General Assembly, which took place at November 8<sup>th</sup>. You can read more about these events and what happened at them in this Newsletter – Have a nice read and a Merry Christmas!

### Call for Tender!

As some of you already know, the European Commission has approached us with a call for Tender. The Tender is called “*Actions to extend the Availability and Improve the Quality of Debt-advice Services for European Households*”, and the purpose is to extend the availability and improve the quality of debt advise services across Europe. We are of course working hard to find out whether the ECDN can take a lead in this tender, as its purpose is among our primary goals, and as of yet, we are waiting for the board meeting at, our member, Cresus, who would in this case spearhead the participation of the ECDN in this Tender. We are of course very interested in help from all our members and would be welcome any recommendations and offers of help from you. You can contact the president, Sandy Madar, at [president@ecdn.eu](mailto:president@ecdn.eu). You will all get more information about the board meeting in Cresus and what they decide to do, on Monday (Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup>).

### ECDN website and social media

As many of you know our website ECDN.eu is still under construction. At the Management Committee meeting in September it was decided, that as the old website could not be saved, we would have to create an entirely new website. We have been working hard to accomplish this, and our hope is that this website will be up and running before Christmas.

As many of you see, our social media sites have started to post news and events again. This is good for our image and shows that we, as an organization, participate in the debate and discussion on the European scene. But we also need you. So far, most of the posts have been about trips, conferences and meetings, which our president, Sandy Madar, have attended, but as the ECDN is not a one-man-operation we would also like to know and share what the rest of our lovely members are working on and up to. That is why we urge you to send us information on events, conferences, meetings and projects that you are all participating in to us at [info@ecdn.eu](mailto:info@ecdn.eu) then we will make sure to post it on our social media accounts.

Lastly, if you are not yet following us on social media, we highly encourage you and your colleagues to do so – It is a nice and easy way to connect and learn what is happening within the ECDN. You can find us on both [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



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### Is there such a thing as alternatives to the commercial banks?

The answer to this question is a big and echoing YES! And there is lots of them. This question has been investigated and researched in and across of Europe. It has resulted in a report on Cultural banks and five articles which is portraying five different themes in relation to the report. This article will address the above.

The process started with an interest in investigating the aspect of alternative banks which considers things such as religion, equality, or climate to be important things. Doing this investigating process were there created contact to relevant people from all over Europe, who was asked to answer if there were any alternatives to the commercial banks in their country? This resulted in a representation from countries such as the Nordic countries, France, Poland, The Netherlands, The UK, Germany, and finally Ireland. I just want to use this opportunity to thank each and every one of you whom I have been in contact with doing this process. It has been a huge help and pleasure to have these international connections when investigating an international subject.

The international representation in this report has shown how the alternatives to the commercial banks is represented across Europe. For example, is it possible to read about the different countries in the scientific report: “Cultural Banks”. Let us look at an example – for example do they in Sweden have cultural banks that works and focuses on ethics. They are very interested in helping the climate, which most of the world is, but in Sweden they have created a bank that considers this. In the Netherlands do they have social banks which takes care of the vulnerable people, who may find themselves in a situation where they cannot make head or tail of their economic situation. Social banks are the last solution for such people. But social banks are not a common thing in a lot of other countries.

The report also investigates the aspect of Islamic banking. Because in a way Islamic finance could be understood as a social bank. Islamic Finance are having a hard time, because of the negative connotation that figures around the wording of ‘Islamic’. This is understandable, but could Islamic Finance – just the structure of it – be accepted if it was called something else? Maybe Cultural Finance? The report ‘Cultural Banks’ also investigates if Islamic Finance could or can be used as a tool to financial inclusion. This is being discussed in the report.

If this have caught your interest, you will be able to read the report and the articles at the ECDN [Facebook page](#) and on their [LinkedIn page](#). The five articles have been published each Monday from the 18<sup>th</sup> of November to the 16<sup>th</sup> of December.

If you find either the report ‘Cultural Banks’ or one of the five articles interesting – or all – you are more than welcome to contact Anne-Sofie Blicher Engstrøm on [innovation@socialeretshjaelp.dk](mailto:innovation@socialeretshjaelp.dk) if you have any suggestions, questions, or comments.



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## Money Advice and Budgeting 2020 and Beyond (MABS)

The president of the ECDN, Sandy Madar attended The Citizens Information Board conference in Ireland at the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2019. The conference was about 'Money Advice and Budgeting 2020 and Beyond', which means that it concretely was about MABS and the very inspiring work they do. MABS is an ideal for a lot of countries around Europe. This conference is a representation of several countries within the European Union getting together and cooperating about finding concrete solutions on how to deal with overindebtedness. Sandy



was invited to do a speak about at the conference, which we are very proud of. We are very proud to be a part of an international and European masterclass when it comes to facing overindebtedness. And we suggest and encourage others to cooperate within and across Europe on other themes as well. Lastly, we would like to thank you everyone who attended the conference and a special thank

you to Adrian O'Connor for hosting the event.

## 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the ECDN d. 8/11

On November the 8<sup>th</sup> our annual General Assembly took place in Amsterdam. At the assembly we discussed a lot of different things, among other things changes in the statutes and internal rules of the ECDN. The Management Committee presented its thoughts and hopes to what should be changed, among other things the membership types and the membership fees – unfortunately as we had not





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been able to prepare the actual proposals of change ahead of time, only minor changes were made to the statutes; one of the larger changes were the introduction of a new type of membership – the honorary member – it is an individual free membership awarded to people who have been seen to work extremely hard for the ECDN and to fight for financial inclusion and to prevent overindebtedness in Europe. Changes were also made to the internal rules, one of them being to set the last date for paying the one's membership fee to March 31<sup>st</sup>. Lastly the General Assembly confirmed the hiring of Sebastian J. Løper from the Social Legal Aid as the new coordinator of the ECDN.

Following all the heavy administrative discussion the ECDN member NIBUD from the Netherlands made a presentation on the financial position of households in the Netherlands. The average debt per household has been rising for the past 10 years in the Netherlands. Some 550.000 households experience serious payment problems in the Netherlands. About ¼ households in both 2012 and 2015 said that this was due to a decline in income. "It costs society about 100.000 euro for one household with serious financial problems. The costs stem from lost payments, welfare and support, leave and health costs, lost working hours, income support and house evictions". Four ways to decrease the chance of financial problems: 1. Motivate people organizing and keeping administration 2. Promote savings behaviour (unconsciously) 3. Financial education by parents, school and society, and 4. When Living on social welfare (a) Mind attitude and capabilities and (b) Extra financial support.

This presentation was followed by a workshop meant to set the priorities of the ECDN. As many of you know, in August our treasurer, Rita Hornung, and MC member Kosta Skliris sent out a short questionnaire to all members asking a variety of different questions, among other to the size of members and their priorities as members of the ECDN. The four biggest priorities among the members were (1) Financial Education Gathering and sharing of knowledge on how to improve financial education. (2) Quality and methodology of debt resolution, European Code of conduct and quality standard (3) Financing the system of debt regulation and advice, How does each country get sufficient funding for service delivery? What can we adopt? (4) Brussels lobby and advocacy, New European laws, new policy initiatives, a subsidized program of our own?

Following this the General Assembly discussed the possible introduction of quality standards and a code of conduct for members of the ECDN. Quality standard ensure a political recognition. It is important for us to look at it at the same level as law. The code of conduct should describe the fundamental rules and practices for both individuals and organisations in their service delivery and acts as guidelines for quality standards. It's a building block for national quality standards. It will be helpful for some members which can use it as a guide in their own countries, but also for any future members who will be able to use it for inspiration and identification.

Lastly the General Assembly discussed the legal aspects of insolvency procedures across Europe. Here we were guested by Bluestar a European lobbying company who gave us some useful tools to focus our effort in the future.



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## The Time is now – EAPN conference

On November 18<sup>th</sup> our president, Sandy Madar, participated in the 18th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty held by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN). The purpose of this meeting was to talk about the reasons of poverty in Europe. The event started with informal networking between the participants, showcasing the preparations done between the delegations. This was followed by a formal opening by the Vice-President of EAPN, Vera Hinterdorfer and three testimonies from three people with direct experience of poverty. The conference then held *World café discussions*, here the delegations meet in groups and discussed a number of different topics from their national perspective: Access to housing, Participation of people experiencing poverty in the lives of their communities and societies, Access to adequate minimum income, Access to good quality health care services and last but not least Access to decent jobs and equal employment opportunities. These topics were discussed thoroughly between different groups during the day and gave a lot of valuable insights on the national situation in the countries of the participating delegations.



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## Ten Years after Pittsburgh: Changing Finance for Good?



Left to right: Olivier Jeruslamy, Iain Ramsey, Francesco Gaetano & Richard Ahlström

On November 19<sup>th</sup>, Sandy Madar went to the annual conference of Finance Watch in Brussels titled “Ten Years after Pittsburgh: Changing Finance for Good?”. The conference started with a keynote speech by Philippe Lamberts Member of the European Parliament. The rest of the conference consisted of three workshops; the first



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workshop discussed “how we can achieve a safe and inclusive single market for EU financial services” – in the following discussion the panel discussed both the basic financial services within the EU and the problem of overindebtedness on the panel were among other Eric Ducoulombier and Francesco Gaetano from the European Commission. The second workshop discussed the question of old and new challenges to financial stability in the post-crisis regulation. The panel discussed among other things the Banking Union and whether Europe needs less bank and more capital market financing. In the last workshop went to look on the future when they discussed the topic of moving towards a sustainable financial system both in regard to the role of the central banks and supervisors and the Sustainable Finance Action Plan 2.0.

You can see all the videos and slides from the conference [Here](#).

Best wishes,

Sandy Madar, President of ECDN / Sebastian Løper, Coordinator of ECDN

Anne-Sofie Engstrøm, Political Consultant at The Social Legal Aid.

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From all of us,  
To all of you  
Have a very Merry Christmas  
And  
Happy New Year