

A study on implementation networks within Europe

# Implementation Networks Report

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17 December 2020



## Colophon

ZonMw is The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development.

Progress requires research and development. ZonMw funds health research and stimulates use of the knowledge developed to help improve health and healthcare.

ZonMw's main commissioning organisations are the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.

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## Introduction and aim

The Netherlands Organization for Health Research and Innovation (ZonMw) has been commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to conduct a project assessing the need for and the feasibility of establishing the Netherlands Implementation Collaborative (NIC). It will be assessed if the NIC could and should be *the* Dutch organization aimed at professionalising the field of Implementation in health care. As part of this project, ZonMw is aiming to understand the foundations of other Implementation Networks within Europe with regards to their general structure and governance, members, finances and determinants of practice. Fostering this understanding will help govern and maintain such networks as well as helping other countries and regions to set up their own network. Additionally, providing such information can form a basis for conversations with national governmental and funding bodies about the establishment and sustainment of these types of networks.

## Methods

### Inclusion of implementation networks

Within Europe, the European Implementation Collaborative (EIC) is a central network focused on implementation within the broad spectrum of welfare and human service systems. The EIC links the individuals and groups working in this area in Europe back to the growing global community of implementation science and practice and contributes a European perspective to the wider development of the field.<sup>1</sup> On April 1st of 2020, the EIC hosted a European Implementation Networks Call chaired by Bianca Albers (past chair of the EIC). All implementation networks in Europe that were known to the EIC at that time were invited to the call. The attending representatives of the networks were asked by Pauline Goense<sup>2</sup> if they were willing and able to participate in his study on implementation networks. All attendees were positive about this study.

### Online survey and interviews

On July 1<sup>st</sup> of 2020, all attendees of the European Implementation Networks Call as well as those who could not attend the network meeting but had been invited (N=8), were contacted by e-mail with the request to fill in an online survey and provide information about the network they represented. The online survey was created in SurveyMonkey and consisted of primarily open questions on the following topics:

1. General info
2. Governance
3. Finance
4. Members
5. Activities
6. Communications
7. Obstacles, facilitators and lessons learned

The complete survey can be found in appendix 1. All but one network completed the survey (see Table 1) between July 1<sup>st</sup> and August 10<sup>th</sup> of 2020.

Following the survey, a sub sample of representatives of four networks were asked to participate in an additional online interview (see Table 1). The Irish network was asked for an interview because they were unable to respond to the survey within the set timeline. The other three networks that participated in the interviews were invited for an interview because their responses in the survey needed some more explanation. The online interviews were held between August 17<sup>th</sup> and September 16<sup>th</sup> of 2020 and lasted around 1 hour each. The interviews were semi-structured around the same topics as the survey. One interviewer and one note-taker participated in the online interviews.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.implementation.eu](http://www.implementation.eu)

<sup>2</sup> Pauline is first author of this report, works for The Netherlands Organization for Health Research and Innovation (ZonMw) and co-initiated the efforts that led to this study.

**Table 1.** Names respondent survey and their network name.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Network name</b>	<b>Survey</b>	<b>Interview</b>
Sabina De Geest	IMPACT Swiss Implementation Science Network	Yes	No
Per Nilsen & Ann Catrine Eldh	Nordic Implementation Interest Group	Yes	Yes
Tom Jefford	UK Implementation Society (UK-IS)	Yes	Yes
Marie-Therese Schultes	German Speaking Implementation Association (GSIA)	Yes	No
Karina Egeland	Norwegian Network for Implementation Research (NIMP)	Yes	No
Ian Røpke	Dansk ImplementeringsNetværk (DIN)	Yes	Yes
Bianca Albers	European Implementation Collaborative (EIC)	Yes	No
Katie Burke	Implementation Network of Ireland and Northern Ireland	No	Yes

## **Network materials**

All publicly available information on the networks was gathered and used, when it was needed to add missing information. More specific information, i.e., mainly financial information about networks, was sent by the respondents per e-mail and has been used when relevant.

## **Consent statements**

The interviewees gave consent for audio recording of the interviews and verbatim transcription with the Otter.ti tool. The survey respondents as well as the interviewees gave consent to use their answers in the ZonMw report to the Dutch Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and to share the results with the other respondents, the EIC board, EIC members and with a broader public through blogposts and other communication materials such as a journal article.

## **Analyses**

The survey results have been analysed in Excel. Dedoose (2020, free version) was used for analysing the qualitative interview data. Codes were based on the main constructs that also formed the survey.

## **Results**

### **1. General information**

#### **1.1 The fields the networks operate in**

The fields in which the different European implementation networks operate are health care, social services, education, criminal justice, family support, or any other public services. The networks are focussed on evidence-based and evidence-informed human services (also see paragraph 4.3).

#### **1.2 The purpose of the networks**

The survey results show that the primary purpose pursued by all networks is to provide networking opportunities for implementation researchers, practitioners, policy makers and other interested stakeholders and to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas on implementation. An additional central purpose of most networks is to identify and disseminate knowledge resources on implementation science.

A couple of networks also aim to build the capacity and expertise of individuals and organisations for more effective, evidence-informed implementation of services – by supporting, organising and hosting learning, training and education on implementation. Some networks also specifically highlight their purpose of promoting greater awareness and understanding of implementation science and practice. Specific to the European Implementation Collaborative (EIC) is the purpose to identify and develop a common Europe-specific knowledge base and language on implementation in order to define the specific contextual factors of the European human service delivery systems that encompass implementation work in European countries. Furthermore, the EIC also aims to link the individuals and groups working in this area in Europe back to the growing global community of implementation science and practice and contribute a European perspective to the wider development of the field. Finally, one network also sees a role in leveraging funding options for implementation science.

### 1.3 The starting point of the networks

In general, the efforts that led to the founding of networks included in this study, began between 2009 and 2019, with their formalisation commencing between 2013 and 2020 (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Start of effort and start of network

Network name	Effort started	Network founded
Nordic Implementation Interest Group	06-04-2009	June 2013
IMPACT Swiss Implementation Science Network	01-06-2019	15-10-2020
UK Implementation Society (UK-IS)	01-01-2010	18-06-2017
German Speaking Implementation Association (GSIA)	2016	27-04-2017
NIMP (Norwegian network for implementation research)	15-03-2019	22-11-2020
European Implementation Collaborative (EIC)	24-11-2012	26-05-2015
Dansk Implementeringsnetværk (DIN)	08-02-2012	30-08-2012
Implementation Network of Ireland and Northern Ireland	2011	2012

Most networks were initiated a few years ago by individuals enthusiastic about implementation. They worked to gather people and organisations sharing this interest and began to exchange ideas and knowledge around implementation with like-minded colleagues. They initiated mailing lists in collaboration with others who were interested in implementation or organised a meeting to talk about the idea of forming a network.

Following the first Global Implementation Conference (GIC) in 2011, the idea for the European network emerged from a group of international colleagues from the UK, Ireland, and Denmark who all had attended the GIC and subsequently reached out to others to promote the idea of a European Collaborative in November 2012. Similarly, the Implementation Network of Ireland and Northern Ireland was founded after the GIC in 2011, for which there had been funding to bring a substantial group of Irish attendees. Post the conference, these attendees wanted to continue their learning, and funding was available to form a network and support network activities.

The Danish Implementation Network (DIN) is another example of a network that developed post the 2011 GIC, which a mixed group of Danish government officials and representatives for service organisations had attended. Provided with in-kind support from the National Board of Social Services (*Socialstyrelsen*), this group gathered in Denmark and quickly decided to form an association (*forening*) as this is the most common approach to organise individuals and organisations with a shared professional interest in Denmark. Furthermore, this was – viewed from an administrative viewpoint – the easiest way to establish the network. The Swiss Implementation Science Network (IMPACT) was launched by two institutions (Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute & Department Public Health, University of Basel) with a strong implementation science focus in their research programs.

The initiators behind these networks all share a genuine and deep interest in implementation science and practice. In most cases, this interest was triggered by their experience that major challenges exist when aiming to translate high-quality evidence into daily clinical practice, and the routines of health systems or service organisations. They refer to considerable research waste in that knowledge about effective care exists but remains underutilised and instead ends on library bookshelves instead of where it is most needed. In other words, the initiators promote implementation and establish networks to enable the change that is needed to push forward the delivery of effective care in routine service settings.

### 1.4 The implementation science landscapes the networks operate in

In the interviews, multiple respondents referred to the implementation science landscape in which the networks operate because these landscapes potentially influence how networks can operate. With landscapes we mean the attention to and strategic position of implementation science in a country.

In Sweden there are few university departments designated for implementation science. More often some departments (like quality improvement research and health care science,) include teams and/or individuals conducting implementation research. Further, there are researchers who engage in implementation research although at times this is referred to as intervention studies rather than ‘implementation’ research. There are a number of people, like P. Nilsen at Linköping university, H. Hasson at Karolinska Institutet, and L. Wallin at Dalarna University, who have tailored professorships in implementation science which have been formed because of their expertise. The Nordic network

representatives claim that it has been a slow progress raising the awareness of implementation science nationally. This is illustrated for example by the lack of implementation scientists on the larger funder's review boards. Until there were such competence included, it has been extremely hard to substantially fund this type of projects. Yet, at least the last five years ago, implementation experts have been invited by the funding organisations, which has helped increase the understanding of and the need for this expertise. Further, in 2019, one of the funding agencies launched the first grants specifically for implementation science, with indications that there may be more. This is understood as a growing awareness of implementation science, and its role and function, primarily in health care but also other areas like social care, management and veterinary medicine.

In Denmark, respondents described implementation science as still not being a priority and as not being acknowledged as a separate skill or profession. At times, organisations or organisational units show a targeted interest in implementation and invest a limited amount of money in specific implementation projects but without this becoming a more widespread focus area. Against this backdrop, the Danish network works to highlight the importance of implementation, and to disseminate knowledge about good implementation broadly in Danish society.

In the UK, different individuals at different universities conduct implementation research. It would be impossible to name them all, which is why the below represent a selection of prominent researchers who are leading groups of staff who conduct implementation research for at least a part of their time.

- At King's College London, **Nick Sevdalis** holds a professorship on *Implementation Science and Patient Safety* and also heads the Centre for Implementation Science, which was established in 2014 and became operational in 2015. The centre aims to develop the discipline of implementation science, and its researchers support the capacity building work of the National Institute of Applied Health Research's (NIHR's) Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) South London.
- Professor of Medical Sociology **Carl May** is part of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He conducts implementation research focused on the sociology of health technologies and of human relations in the healthcare systems of high-income countries.
- At Northumbria University, Professor of Healthcare and Implementation Science **Tracy Finch** teaches at the Department of Nursing, Midwifery & Health and pursues her research in implementation science, most notably Normalization Process Theory (NPT), of which she is co-developer.
- Professor **Jo Rycroft-Malone**, who is also the Dean of the Faculty of Health and Medicine at Lancaster University, is a prominent and widely acknowledged implementation scientist, who also chairs also the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Implementation Strategy Group.

Other groups gathered around key scholars may exist but can be difficult to identify, partly because they form smaller units that are not visible through university websites, partly because they do not necessarily use "implementation science" to label their work and instead talk about "spread of innovations", "behavior change", "knowledge translation" or other terminology used for research fields that overlap, are strongly related with or form a subfield to implementation science. These factors also make it difficult to identify single researchers who conduct implementation research across the country, yet, in a somewhat isolated fashion – because they are part of larger research groups whose focus is not implementation science. Noteworthy though, is that the field of improvement science, which is strongly related to implementation science, has an important status in the UK health sector. Recently, this was confirmed with the founding of The Healthcare Improvement Studies (THIS) Institute, which was funded by the Health Foundation. Launched in 2018, THIS works to develop the evidence base needed to support healthcare improvement in the UK and is led by Mary Dixon-Woods, Professor of Healthcare Improvement Studies in the Department of Public Health and Primary Care at the University of Cambridge.

Implementation science training opportunities exist in the UK but at a relatively small scale. For example, King's College offers an annual Masterclass in implementation science. The University of Manchester has developed a Master of Public Health (MPH), which has "Implementation Science" as a subtitle. At Bangor University, the *Masters by Research* programme is embedded in the 'Implement@Bangor', which has a particular focus on studying and undertaking implementation, with particular attention to service improvement, quality assurance and the application of implementation to increase the use of evidence in practice

In Ireland, multiple individuals, spread across different universities, have been developing their expertise in implementation science. Some received grants from the national Health Research Board

to conduct implementation research related to health interventions. The University of Limerick for example has formed The Health Implementation Science and Technology Cluster (HIST) which is established on the basis of funding from the Health Research Institute (HRI). In addition, Trinity College in Dublin set up a postgraduate certificate in implementation science six to seven years ago and then developed this certificate into a full Masters in Implementation Science. However, this Masters education has been paused for an undefined time. At University College Cork, based in the School of Public Health, the ESPRIT research group works to use existing data to establish health priorities and develop, test and inform the implementation and dissemination of research-supported interventions and policies across the care continuum and across settings. Implementation science is one of its key focus areas. This group also regularly hosts training opportunities for those interested in becoming implementation researchers.

In recent years, an increased interest in implementation science has been observed among individual researchers and research groups at Swiss Universities. This is reflected in professorships in implementation science, one of which was launched at the University of Zurich, while the other position is currently advertised at the University of Lausanne. Furthermore, the Department of Public Health (DPH) at the University of Basel together with the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute initiated the founding of the Swiss Implementation Science Network IMPACT. Both institutions have implementation science infrastructures and conducted a number of larger implementation science projects funded by the Swiss National Science foundation and other competitive funding agencies. Implementation science courses in the country are offered at the graduate level at the Institute of Nursing Science at DPH, University of Basel. In addition, a regular “winter school” is organized as part of the interuniversity PhD of Nursing Science (SPINE) connected to the Universities of Basel and Lausanne.

In Germany, Dutch born Professor Dr Michel Wensing works at the Department of General Practice and Health Services Research at Heidelberg University Hospital and here he has helped to create a Masters focused on implementation science and offered annually to about 20 students. Professor Wensing is the editor-in chief of *Implementation Science*, the first journal to provide a dedicated space for implementation research. Apart from this “scientific island” there seem to be no strong implementation science environments in German academia. In most cases, single researchers develop an interest in implementation science within their main subject (e.g., prevention, social work, public health) and pursue this interest on their own or together with a few colleagues. Accordingly, only few universities are offering courses in implementation science.

## **2 Governance of the networks**

### **2.1 How is the network set-up from a legal standpoint?**

Most networks (n=6) are independent, i.e., are not operated/facilitated by specific organisations. This is different for two networks, the Irish and the Swiss network, both of which have a specific organisational “home”. In the case of the Irish network, the Centre for Effective Services (CES) enables and facilitates the network, with its staff organising and coordinating network activities. The Swiss Implementation Science Network is facilitated through the Department of Public Health of the University of Basel and the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute. The future set-up of IMPACT to serve the stakeholders in Swiss implementation science will be determined at the 1st IMPACT conference in January 2021.

The majority of the networks (n=5) are not legal entities. The remaining three networks (the EIC, the UK network and the DIN) are legal entities. The EIC and the Danish network have been set up as a volunteer associations. These count as formal legal entities for which there exist clear operational rules in Denmark but also no specific law. The UK network has been established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (see paragraph 2.2).

When asked whether making the Irish network a legal entity had been an option, network representatives responded that the network steering group and others had discussed this a number of times – among others as part of a review the network had been asked to conduct. Following this review, it was decided to not make the network a separate legal entity because this would be time- as well as cost-intensive, including, for example, in the form of costs for annual accounting, the official registration and other administrative tasks. However, survey respondents also acknowledged that running an informal network creates different challenges, such as the responsibility to keep it going, to organize activities etc. If you have one organization behind the network (such as the case in the Irish network) this can be a blessing and a hindering factor, you really need to find the balance what that organization does and how you activate other organizations to be involved.

### 2.1.1 The UK network: A charitable incorporated organisation

Different from all other networks, the UK network has been established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This means it has charitable status under UK law but also is a trading organisation. An important reason for the UK network to choose this legal status, has been to provide a structure and a format that people would understand and through which there is clarity on the rules, obligations and entitlements.

A charitable incorporated organisation is a relatively new form of hybrid between a charity and a business. While some charities are about raising money for causes, others are about membership, and the CIO provides a way for establishing a membership-based organization.

Among the negatives of being a CIO is the charitable law itself, which has been described as cumbersome. Administered by the Charity Commission (CC), the law includes a strong set of data expectations for trustees of charities related to legal responsibilities and audit, independence and legal liability. The CC also tends to keep a critical eye on charities that appear to be too entrepreneurial and thereby appear to operate too much as a business. Furthermore, the UK-IS has to document every year that it is still eligible for charitable status, based on, for example, independent audits of accounts, which triggers extra costs for the network to pay.

The positives of being a CIO is the recognition as a charity. It means that the UK-IS can reclaim VAT and does not have to pay business rates. The network can also seek charitable donations either from individuals or from trusts and from other independent organizations, allowing for considerable fundraising activities to take place.

### 2.2 Boards and/or representative organs within the networks

Three networks do not have a board or a similar kind of steering entity (yet) within the network. The Swiss network is developing this part of the network. The Nordic networks depicts itself as an e-mail distribution list only at this time, but guide people to the European Implementation Collaborative if they want to also keep up with the implementation science field on a more regular bases, and to get more access to resources. In the German network the network founder manages the network and also functions as its chair and representative. Network-related matters are discussed among the founding members of the network.

Five networks (Irish, EIC, Danish, UK and Norwegian) are governed by a board or steering group. Apart from the founding board, whose members often are recruited among those already engaged in initiating the network, governing bodies are formed through elections held among network members. This is the case for, e.g., the EIC, the Danish and the Norwegian network. These elections take place annually or biennially, for example as part of a General Assembly during which network members cast their votes. Only the UK network is governed by a board that is self-nominated.

The number of board members ranges from 7 to 9 and the terms for a board member range from one year to four years (see Table 3). The most commonly found roles represented on a network board are: Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Scientific Lead. Most networks aim to recruit board members from different sectors, i.e., health, social services, education etc., and different domains, i.e., research, practice and policy. In Table 3 it shows that the implementation networks have board members coming from different domains. Some networks also have an advisory committee (Danish).

**Table 3.** Number of board members and board terms in years

Network	Board members (n=)	Terms board members (years)	Type of organisations represented in the board (number and percentage)			
			Research	Government	Service provider	Intermediary
UK Implementation Society (UK-IS)	7	3	2 (28,6%)	1 (14,3%)	1 (14,3%)	3 (42,9%)
NIMP (Norwegian network for implementation research)	6	2	3 (50%)	1 (16,7%)	1 (16,7%)	1 (16,7%)
European Implementation Collaborative (EIC)	7	2	4 (57,1%)	1 (14,3%)	1 (14,3%)	1 (14,3%)
Dansk Implementeringsnetværk (DIN)	9	1	3 (33,3%)	5 (55,6%)	1 (11,1%)	0

Implementation Network of Ireland and Northern Ireland	7	4	1 (14,3%)	3 (42,9%)	2 (28,6%)	1 (14,3%)
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The UK board meets approximately every six weeks to two months, by web or tele-conference or in person. The Irish Steering group meets two to three times per year by video or teleconference. The EIC board meets at least four times each year, at least one of these meetings will be held as face-to-face meeting, other meetings may be held by phone and/or Internet.

Four networks (Irish, Danish, EIC and UK) have a secretary that helps with specific tasks such as arranging meetings, communications, membership administration, conference preparation etc. In Appendix 2 the profile for the scientific secretary of the EIC is included. This role was named “*scientific secretary*” because it has been – and is – involved in the conduct of research emerging from the EIC in collaboration with and for partner organisations. The EIC secretary workload equals 3-4 weekly hours but varies substantially over time.

In other networks, secretary hours depend on the available finances. The Danish network has a secretary for about 20 hours a month. The secretary for the UK network is available a couple of hours a month to help with meeting arrangements, website updates and membership payments.

### **2.2.1 Responsibilities of the board and/or steering groups**

In general, the board and/or steering group is the driving force behind network development and operations. These entities are responsible for pursuing the intended aim and goals of their network, for controlling (potential) finances, and for coordinating events and activities. The answers from both survey and interviews highlight that the board of a network or even just the single person who chairs it (when there is no board) conduct most of the work in a network.

In Ireland, the steering group of the Irish Network is responsible for making recommendations to the Implementation Network on:

1. The future focus and aims of the Implementation Network, including considering:
  1. How, and in what areas, the Implementation Network can add most value, and
  2. Who (what sectors / audiences) the Implementation Network should address.
2. Future events and activities for the network:
  1. On the island of Ireland, and
  2. In terms of international linkages and collaborations.
3. Structures and mechanisms for developing and maintaining the Implementation Network over time
4. Funding options to allow the Implementation Network to operate

For the EIC, the bylaws<sup>3</sup> define the duties of the Board of Directors, including, but not limited to:

1. Approving a budget for each year and authorizing expenditures falling outside of the preapproved budget and in excess of the discretionary level of spending as stated in EIC policies.
2. Establishing and overseeing the policies that guide the EIC.
3. Establishing ongoing monitoring and evaluation that helps the Board shape policy and fulfil its responsibility for (i) monitoring the EIC’s performance, (ii) monitoring the effectiveness and reasonable progress toward the EIC’s goals, and (iii) ensuring the effectiveness of its governance.
4. Engaging with EIC members in establishing, refining, and evaluating the policies that guide the EIC.
5. Authorizing any matters to be submitted to a vote of the general membership of the EIC, including election of board members.
6. Authorizing the formation or affiliation of any subsidiary organisations not in conflict with the Bylaws, and considered to be appropriate to the policies, operation, and purpose of the EIC.
7. The development of policies that guide the formation and operation of such groups, including topical interest groups.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://implementation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/FullyExecuted\\_Bylaws\\_RevisedMay2018.pdf](https://implementation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/FullyExecuted_Bylaws_RevisedMay2018.pdf)

### 3 Network finances

#### 3.1 Membership fees

Two (UK and Danish) out of eight networks charge a membership fee. The yearly membership fee for the Danish network costs € 110,- for an individual and € 555,- for an institutional membership. The UK yearly regular membership fee is € 83,-, whereas registered students pay €45,- euro. The UK network provides a discount if memberships are signed for two and three years.<sup>4</sup>

In return for this fee, members have access to resources developed and collated especially for the network and reduced fees for events, networking meetings and in the case of the Danish network the yearly conference. It is worth noting that the UK network, in considering what to offer members in return for their fees, struggled to identify the number and types of benefits that they felt they were able to provide their members. Noteworthy, too, is that the UK network described the process of installing a payment process and system as surprisingly difficult and expensive.

Interestingly, the Danish network is currently thinking about lowering the price for a membership in the hope of building a larger membership group. The Norwegian network NIMP on the other hand, is in the process of introducing a yearly membership fee from 2021. It is planned to be about €19 for a one-year individual membership.

Other networks do not charge a membership fee and have clear reasons for this approach. The Irish network is convinced that people are not willing to pay money for a membership. The EIC board has also discussed whether establishing a fee-based membership would be required to cover - at a minimum - running costs. However, setting up the administration for memberships that involve multiple countries, different valuta, and different languages - showed to exceed the income reasonable to aim for and the administrative resources available to the network at this stage. Furthermore, the EIC felt there was reason to be cautious about what it had to offer its members and the competition from other associations that individuals or organisations potentially can be members of. Hence, the decision to let membership be as inclusive and straightforward as possible, i.e., free of charge.

Noteworthy in this context, too, is the fact that none of the different national and European networks holds its own scientific journal – something that can be observed for some US based implementation networks. There, linkages with a journal are sometimes used by networks as an asset to attract members, for example by offering a discount on journal subscription fees or by making it easy to publish the proceedings of a network conference.

#### 3.2 Funds, grants and other income

Five networks have received funding for certain activities. At times, these grants have been specific, such as grants provided to host a specific conference or specific training opportunities for post graduate students (Swiss and the Linköping university, hosting the Nordic network). This also means that most funds have not been structural but were provided as one-off payments.

The EIC, for example, received € 127.500 seed funding from Atlantic Philanthropies for its establishment to occur between 2014 and 2016. The network also received support from the Swedish National Board of Health and Social Care (€ 7.315) to conduct the 2018 Nordic Implementation Conference and was successful in being funded to develop an implementation guide for the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addictions (€ 5.000).

The Nordic network originates from a period where implementation science was highlighted as a future core at Linköping university, under the lead of P. Nilsen; funding was provided to settle during 2009-2015 by the Region Östergötland (formerly known as county council), and the university. The starting point of the Nordic network was a conference, where participants joined an e-mail list for further communication and highlights.

The UK network has received a few small grants of less than € 5.500 each. The Norwegian network received some support from the two organisations whose staff initiated the founding of the network, used to hold two seminars in 2019 and 2020 in preparation of the network launch. The Swiss network received no funding at the moment of this study.

Respondents highlighted that applying for funding takes time – partly because relevant tenders have to be identified, partly because someone has to do the work of writing proposals and grant applications. The EIC, for example, hired an EU consultant to identify relevant EU calls for

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<sup>4</sup> For pricing also see: <https://www.ukimplementation.org.uk/join-uk-is>

tenders and, through this process, realised that it would not have the resources necessary to lead the development of “own” proposals.

Organising a conference was also mentioned as a source of income for a network. The Danish network for example hosts an annual conference, which attracts between 100 and 220 participants, with members receiving a discount on their registration fee. Following this conference, the revenue then is used on network activities in the following year, including preparing a new conference. The Irish network is developing short courses on implementation, which they consider charging for once they can be opened. This would generate a basic income for the network needed to cover running costs.

### 3.3 Networks’ running costs

Running an implementation network implies expenses for cost items such as:

- Administration / research (membership administration, research tasks, funding applications etc.),
- Communication (development and maintenance of website, e-mail accounts, social media, graphic design tools etc.)
- Event preparation and execution (renting venues, hiring event planners, speaker travel and accommodation, catering etc.)
- Financial administration (independent account auditing)
- Network development (engaging external support)

To illustrate these costs in greater detail, EIC expenses for the years 2018-2019 are provided in Table 4, followed by Table 5 presenting an overview of costs covered by the Danish network between 2019 and 2021. Note that these costs do not include developing a basic infrastructure for operating a network such as a website or similar first-time investments. Furthermore, budgets for larger conferences are not included as these require to be costed separate from running costs.

This means that annual running costs for a network may begin at a level of minimum € 5.000,-. However, it is highly likely that greater investment is needed because networks according to experience rely heavily on volunteer efforts from engaged stakeholders. In developing the EIC, it has shown that next to basic administrative/running costs of € 5.000-6.000 (see Table 4), staff centrally involved in the development of the network would use minimum 2-3 days per month on this work, equalling staff expenses of approximately € 30,000 per year during the 3 years it took to develop the network. In addition, Atlantic Philanthropies provided considerable additional funding to include the EIC and its launch in the planning of the third Global Implementation Conference, which took place in Dublin in 2015.

**Table 4.** Total running costs of the EIC for 2018 & 2019

Type	Info	Costs (€)
Administration / research	Scientific secretary	2.419,50
Communication	Website maintenance	1.326,62
Event preparation and execution	Planning of an event held in Brussels + support to a Dutch implementation event.	6.371,66
Financial administration	Account fees	80,61
<b>Total (for 2 years)</b>		<b>10.198,39</b>
<b>Average annual running costs</b>		<b>5.099,20</b>

**Table 5.** Yearly running costs of the Danish Implementation Network for 2019 - 2021

Type	Info	Costs (€)
Administration / research	Secretary	5.825,00
Communication	Website maintenance; instalment of an easy sign-up member registration; teleservice	1.775,00
Event preparation and execution	Board travel & meeting expenses	440,00

Financial administration	Accountant / account fees	5.895,00
<b>Total annual running costs</b>		<b>13.935,00</b>

Next to these running costs, the investment in a network website is typically mentioned as a substantial cost factor in the early development of a network. It includes defining and buying a domain name, a web host and the website itself, which for networks typically are small scale sites of moderate complexity. However, even with these limited requirements, developing an appropriate website still necessitates a budget of around €4.000. A 2016 rebuilt of the DIN website did cost €2.939 whereas the latest re-design of the EIC website caused basic expenses of approximately €3.800

## 4 Network membership

### 4.1 Becoming a member

Becoming a member of an implementation network is a straightforward process, implying, in most cases, to just sign up through a website and then – if required as in Denmark and the UK – pay a membership fee. Since Danish members can be institutions, the network at times has to assess whether a particularly large institution can still count as one or should be considered as multiple institutions. However, in most cases smaller units of organisations register their interest and become members.

None of the networks had particular membership conditions other than that individuals should share an interest in implementation. To keep the pro bono work manageable, the Nordic network is more cautious as for signing people up. Those, that is so far all, who can give a reasonable route or reference how they learned about the network, are included. The e-mail list is not shared, in order not to violate data sharing regulations, but is managed by one person. In the registration process, potential candidates are informed about the potential benefits of being on the list, and suggested that they also connect with the EIC for further resources. The Swiss Implementation Science Network will decide on its membership conditions at its 1st IMPACT conference in January 2021.

Finally, most networks have a particular national, regional or language focus (such as the German Speaking network), implicitly limiting membership to those who speak the appropriate language and/or shares the geographical focus. While the EIC aims to keep a European focus in its activities, it is not a requirement to be European to become a member. In fact, the network counts a number of overseas individuals among its members.

### 4.2 Members per network

The Swiss and Norwegian networks are in development still and currently do not have a registered list of members.

For all other networks, membership numbers ranged between 50 and 460 at the time when data for this study were collected (between July and September 2020). In Table 6 there is an overview of members per network. Both the UK and Irish network say they have core group of around 25 persons that regularly attend all activities.

**Table 6.** Members per network

Network	N members (July, 2020)
Nordic Implementation Interest Group	215
UK Implementation Society (UK-IS)	88
German Speaking Implementation Association (GSIA)	67
European Implementation Collaborative (EIC)	460
Dansk Implementeringsnetværk (DIN)	50
Implementation Network of Ireland and Northern Ireland	100

### 4.3 Member roles, disciplines and sectors

All networks are open for individuals working across different roles, disciplines and sectors. While some networks initially may have focused on a specific role in implementation, such as researchers, policymakers or practitioners, these differences disappeared over time. Today, network members commonly include scientists, clinicians/practitioners, policy makers and funders with an interest in enhancing the uptake of evidence in human services through better implementation.

The networks in Denmark and the UK are the only networks that explicitly mention consultants – working in the public sector or for non-government organisations as being among their target groups.

Consultants, who are members of the Danish network are a minority but were described to be particularly active members with a strong communication practice. The Nordic network mentioned that they do not wish to have consultants as members, as the purpose of the network is facilitating the implementation science field (rather than provide for business opportunities).

In terms of sectors, all networks count members from a diverse range of human service sectors, including health, mental health, social welfare, education, and criminal justice. In this way, the orientation of networks is broad and also multidisciplinary, which has a natural reason that comes with the discipline of implementation itself, as this interviewee explained:

*“One of the features of implementation science is that it has no natural home. It touches on loads of different things from education to policy to psychology to evidence-based practice to university research. So, it's really broad and by its very nature it is quite diffuse in the same way. That's quite a tricky thing. If we were doing something like aeronautical engineering, it would be very clear where we landed and where we belonged. But implementation doesn't, because it can be applied in so many different areas<sup>5</sup>”.*

When asked whether such breadth is beneficial, representatives for the Nordic interest group and the Irish network highlighted that the different perspectives are a benefit; any cross sectoral meeting provide for richer discussions and learning opportunities.

#### **4.4 Member implementation knowledge**

The different national and European networks include members with a diverse knowledge about implementation science and practice. The differences in this knowledge base, networks need to address.

For a while, the Irish network therefore always commenced their meetings with a brief introduction to implementation science. Network members received an offer to attend the meeting one hour early if they felt that the world of implementation science was new to them and required an introduction. This introduction was then provided by four volunteers. By now, these introductions have ceased to be delivered because the network is less worried about different levels of knowledge. It has shown that network members are open to any questions asked – even the very basic ones – because some attendees in the meeting will have the same level of knowledge and experience and welcome the question. However, two steering group members of the Irish network are currently working to develop a short introduction to implementation science to create a permanent resource and education that can be provided to implementation newbies over time. Such an introduction is not available in Ireland at the moment.

Across different implementation conferences held by networks in Europe between 2012 and 2018, there has also been a tradition to include at least one basic “Implementation 101” workshop in the conference to ensure that attendees new to the field could “catch up” and better enjoy other program content that built on foundational implementation theories, ideas and concepts.

## **5 Network activities**

### **5.1 Main activities**

All networks describe a repertoire of multiple activities, including:

1. Sharing information and resources (all networks): Announcements of webinars, training sessions, conferences, project proposals and (academic) positions in implementation science. Sharing of publications.
2. Facilitating network development (UK, Switzerland, German is planning): Connecting members with each other through targeted activities that have a focus on building relationships.
3. Hosting educational activities (webinars, seminars, workshops) (UK, German is planning, Norwegian, EIC, Danish, Irish, Switzerland; EIC does this 2 or 3 times/year).
4. Hosting entire conferences (EIC, Danish, Swiss)
5. Developing and providing training (UK, Irish is piloting)
6. Participating in activities of national networks (EIC)

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<sup>5</sup> This quote was modified for readability by the authors.

7. Initiating research collaborations (German, EIC): Members conducted and published studies together

Among these, the most prominent activity coordinated by six networks is to host different educational activities, typically between 2 and 5 per year. The topics of these activities are mixed and include practice as well as policy and research to ensure that they appeal to the different interests present among members. Subjects of recent webinars have been i.e., implementation leadership, patient involvement, implementation of quality assurance programs, implementation science in times of COVID-19, local implementation at a time of crisis and learning about collaboration during a time of crisis.

Inspired by the Dutch Week of Implementation<sup>6</sup>, the UK network has begun to support a yearly implementation week led by Kings College London and to coordinate some of their network activity around this week.

Network activities are mostly open also for non-members (EIC, UK, Irish, Danish, Switzerland), among others to attract new members. The Irish network has made it a habit to ask attendees for feedback after every network meeting, many of which contain particular educational activities. The network's steering group pays attention to this feedback as they plan future meetings.

#### **5.1.1 Positive and negative experiences with activities**

Networks have gathered different experience with their activities. Among the negative experience highlighted by the Danish network were networking sessions between likeminded professionals. These meetings tended to not be centred around a specific presentation, and instead, people were invited to come, meet others and discuss topics of interest to them. People did not attend these sessions, leading the network to assume that meetings have to be organised around clearly defined topics and content.

The Irish network described mixed experiences with organising learning communities. Topics for these learning communities were agreed together with network members and the goal was to enable peer learning, with each group being chaired by a steering group member. Furthermore, the organisation hosting the Irish Network, the Centre for Effective Services (CES) coordinated and administered meetings in all learning communities. While one of these learning communities held positive and productive meetings and might be re-activated in the future, others never commenced their intended activities. The network representative explained that this may have occurred because the support provided to groups showed to not be enough and self-organisation insufficient for communities to progress.

There is also a lot of positive experience with network activities. The UK network described a series of online workshops held around themed discussions and run over the summer of 2020 as a positive experience. Workshops were held during lunchtime hours with generally a short, 5-minute introduction of a subject and a subsequent discussion that lasted for about 45 minutes. Different board members and their colleagues and contacts hosted the workshops. On average, a dozen persons joined each session, all of which were recorded. Currently, the network considers preparing a write-up of these conversations and to continue hosting further workshops on a monthly basis.

The Irish network reported that keeping a regular rhythm for webinars/seminars is important because it ensures that network members get used to this regularity, book their calendars in advance of the activity and plan around it. In this way, it becomes easier to plan and maintain regular network activities. Another positive experience for the Irish network has been the development of a basic introduction to implementation science for those, who are new to the field. An initial pilot of this training could be finalised successfully, and the network now considers how to roll out this training and probably host it once or twice per year – among others a potential source of revenue, as highlighted previously.

Finally, the Danish network highlighted that its annual implementation award, presented as part of the network's regular conference, provided a good opportunity for involving members in its activities. Members are asked, who they think should win the award, and the network then receives many different suggestions.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://weekvandeimplementatie.nl/>

## 5.2 Member engagement

A separate aspect of network activity is that of member engagement: Are members actively engaged in selecting, preparing and executing network activities?

Across networks, there was a striking similarity in the way in which this was described. In some networks, members do participate in organizing conferences or webinars/seminars or the sharing of information, knowledge and experience. However, most members appeared to be mostly passively engaged in networks and thus can be best described as 'consumers' of network activities: they receive newsletters and other information from a network, they participate in webinars/seminars and conferences, and they utilise available resources.

That this is not necessarily a problem shows the Irish experience: The Irish network conducted a review four to five years post its establishment to understand if it was worthwhile to sustain the network in its usual form and with the Centre for Effective Services functioning as its host organisation. The feedback from members was a clear and positive yes, reflecting that members basically were satisfied with how the network was operating.

Nevertheless, the ambitions of networks for engaging members often reach higher, as described by one respondent in the following way:

*"The ideal is: We want members to engage and help shape the activities and communications about implementation in and across European countries. The reality is: The majority will consume information available through the EIC, participate in activities but otherwise remain silent, passive members. The interactions with members - as things are now - depend very much on the board and the secretary to reach out and ask for input, engagement etc."*

Keeping in mind that some networks also described difficulties with sufficient engagement from all board members and other key stakeholders, this illustrates that the facilitation of networks requires considerable effort.

## 5.3 Implementation network collaboration

All implementation networks express being open to cross-network collaboration and to building linkages with other bodies engaged in promoting implementation science and practice in their country or Europe. Often, the organisations that the different board members represent play a role in the development of these linkages.

For example, the UK implementation society has developed a relationship with King's College London and is also linked to the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care (CELSIS) at Strathclyde University Scotland, each of which either was or is represented on the network's board. The German network is affiliated with the educational psychology research group at the University of Vienna, which also is the workplace of its chair. Further collaborations with institutions in Germany and Switzerland are in development. The Swiss network on the other hand, being in the early stages of its development, may develop such linkages in the future – this topic will be discussed at the 1st IMPACT conference in January 2021.

Linkages between networks mainly occur through the facilitation of the EIC. The EIC aims to contact all networks approximately once a year for a specific purpose. In 2018, it hosted an all-network meeting as a precursor to the Nordic Implementation conference, and in preparation of the 2021 European Implementation Event, the EIC has been in touch with all networks multiple times to plan for network involvement in the event. Other contacts between the EIC and the networks are ad hoc. Other connections of importance to especially the EIC are those to networks existing outside of Europe, including the US and Australia. This involves participating in the activities of these overseas networks, including, for example, conferences or online activities. The costs that emerge from such network building are typically covered by the individuals themselves or their organisations – the EIC itself has no budget for board members' conference participation or similar activities.

# 6 Communications

## 6.1 Network promotion and communication

The majority of implementation networks has a website or webpage used to disseminate information about the network and its activities. This is shown in Table 7, which also contains information about the social media presence of networks.

**Table 7.** Main communication channels networks

Network	Website/page	Twitter	LinkedIn
Nordic Implementation Interest Group	Contact can be made via the Implementation Science team at Linköping University: <a href="https://liu.se/forskning/nordisk-implementering">https://liu.se/forskning/nordisk-implementering</a>	N/A	N/A
IMPACT Swiss Implementation Science Network	<a href="https://impact-dph.unibas.ch/about-impact/">https://impact-dph.unibas.ch/about-impact/</a>	@impact_swiss	N/A
UK Implementation Society	<a href="https://www.ukimplementation.org.uk/">https://www.ukimplementation.org.uk/</a>	@UK_ImpNet	N/A
German Speaking Implementation Association	N/A	N/A	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12042484/">https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12042484/</a>
NIMP (Norwegian network for implementation research)	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/nasjonaltimplementeringsnettverk">https://www.facebook.com/groups/nasjonaltimplementeringsnettverk</a>	N/A	N/A
European Implementation Collaborative (EIC)	<a href="http://www.implementation.eu">www.implementation.eu</a>	@ImplementEIC	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/groups/5101581/">https://www.linkedin.com/groups/5101581/</a>
Dansk ImplementeringsNetværk (DIN)	<a href="https://implementering-dk.dk/">https://implementering-dk.dk/</a>	N/A	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/danskimplementering/?originalSubdomain=dk">https://www.linkedin.com/company/danskimplementering/?originalSubdomain=dk</a>
Implementation Network of Ireland and Northern Ireland	<a href="https://www.effectiveservices.org/work/implementation-network-and-initiative">https://www.effectiveservices.org/work/implementation-network-and-initiative</a>	N/A	N/A

The EIC, UK, Irish and Danish implementation networks disseminate a regular newsletter. The Nordic interest group, and the Norwegian and German networks use an e-mail distribution list to send information to their members. The frequency for sending out these newsletters and e-mails ranges from monthly (EIC, Danish, Swiss, Nordic) over bi-monthly (German planning to do this) to three to four times a year (UK, Norwegian, Irish).

A typical newsletter includes between three and four news items, focused on national and international implementation activities such as conferences, training opportunities, resources or comparable topics. At times, newsletters are also used to help implementation researchers distribute surveys or calls for input on studies. Content that is curated by the networks themselves – rather than by organizations working in and with implementation – is rare, but examples exist. For example, since developing its first newsletters, the EIC has regularly included “implementer portraits”, i.e., brief presentations of individuals who were interviewed about their work and experience with implementation. Often, it is the chair, the board or the steering group of a network that provides input on newsletter content.

Other communication channels, especially social media, are frequently used by networks, with *twitter* and the globally used hashtag #impsci being central to especially the EIC and Swiss IMPACT, both of which tweet multiple times per week. To a somewhat lesser degree, this is also the case for the UK network, whereas none of the other network utilise this channel. The Norwegian network on the other hand is the only network that uses *Facebook*.

## 7 Obstacles, facilitators and lessons learned

### 7.1 Obstacles in establishing and running an implementation network

Respondents described multiple obstacles to establishing and maintaining an implementation network, with capacity and finances being at the core of these obstacles. Without funding, which was described as difficult to source, central network stakeholders have only limited time to dedicate to network development and activities. Yet, it is this time that is needed to build and expand a network over time, so it becomes valuable to a maximum of individuals and organisations. However, in most cases,

networks were established on a volunteer basis by individuals who invested their own time. Other obstacles requiring continuous attention from board or steering group members were:

- Connecting a network to more established national networks or institutions because implementation is not necessarily a well-known concept and may appear as “lacking a topical focus”.
- Identifying and engaging individuals who are willing to invest their time and energy, promote a network over longer stretches of time, and to provide continuous network leadership.
- Ensuring a network can maintain its independence and integrity by keeping a distance to particular individual or organisational agendas, and by running a network based on principles of democracy, and transparency.
- Ensuring diversity in board composition and activities over time – this obstacle was brought up by the EIC, which experiences that implementation as a research, practice and policy agenda, has a presence in some but not in all European countries. This can make it difficult to broaden its work beyond what can be viewed “the usual suspects”, i.e., the countries represented in this report. Desirable in the future would be a stronger representation of countries in the Mediterranean, or Eastern Europe.

### **7.2 Facilitators in setting up and running an implementation network**

As a logical consequence of capacity and finances being a central obstacle to network operations, they are also central facilitator. Funding to cover a network’s running costs together with resources to build and shape its profile over time are important for network sustainment. Further facilitators identified by respondents were:

- The availability and engagement of a group of energetic and dedicated individuals who: are enthusiastic about implementation science; are committed to establishing, leading and maintaining a network; feel responsible for the network; are willing to invest time in network development; look for opportunities for the network to grow; and are able to provide information and activities beneficial to members.
- Access to a secretary function, covering administrative as well as communicative functions of a network.
- The strategic priority assigned to implementation science and practice within those organisations whose staff are involved in establishing and running a network - as such prioritisation may imply
  - o that staff has greater flexibility in spending organisational work hours on network activities;
  - o that a network can utilise an organisation’s infrastructure to host webinars/seminars and other activities; and
  - o that organisations provide a network with new impulses, for example through implementation work the organisations conduct.
- The general status and importance of implementation science and practice in a country, including the existence of dedicated implementation roles or professions - as this makes it easier to build a network audience.
- Linkages with and support from other networks to share information and jointly host activities.
- Resources that allow for networks to attend conferences and other implementation events –to promote the network, meet new members and, specifically for the EIC, build international connections as social capital.
- A minimum of two-three media channels that allow to maintain regular contact with different network stakeholders.

### **7.3 Main lessons learned from establishing and running an implementation network**

Taken together, this means that it takes dedication and persistence to establish and run an implementation network, or, as one respondent puts it:

*“Implementing an implementation network is - after all – just another implementation problem”.*

- **Time & money.**
  - o With the above in mind, it cannot be emphasised enough that establishing an implementation network is a time-consuming process that requires adequate funding.
- **People, people, people.**
  - o Find those who are dedicated, find ways to involve them, and ensure that leadership is designated (clearly located) and distributed (shared) among them.  
*“A network is a coalition of the willing, a coalition of people who are willing to do it.”*
- **Independence.**

- Strive for independence so your network does not depend on one or two organisations that might withdraw their support and funding because it may cause your network to fall apart.
- **Integrity.**
  - Maintain your integrity: Know your purpose, position and role; know what you want to achieve; be cautious about who you collaborate with/whose agenda you buy into.
- **Patience.**
  - A network can often only progress as fast as its board – because it represents its central capacity. Therefore, be realistic in your goal setting, planning, and in what you offer your members. Take one step at a time.
  - If there is no 'natural' home for implementation in terms of an institution or academic place that feels that it has ownership of implementation this sense of dispersal across lots of places in small amounts makes coordination of a fragmented group quite difficult.

## Conclusion

The aim of this study was to understand and learn from existing implementation networks operating in Europe how these are structured, governed, and financed, and how and under what conditions they conduct their work. This information will be used in the potential establishment of a Netherlands Implementation Collaborative (NIC).

The study shows that while there are multiple ways to form and run a network, a few key features have emerged as essential for networks to function professionally and reliably. Based on these features, we suggest the Ministry to take the following into account when establishing the NIC.

- Choose between 1) running the network from an organization or, 2) establishing an independent network;
  - It is worthwhile to strive for independence to avoid that the network becomes dependent on one or more organisations that, potentially, might withdraw (in kind) funding and cause the network to fall apart.
  - If run from an organization, make sure other stakeholders are actively involved and also feel ownership of the network.
- A central facilitator in establishing and running an implementation network is capacity and (long term) financial stability. The minimum funding/resources necessary are:
  - A secretary to run the administrative tasks of the network;
  - The development and sustainment of a website and other communication channels.
- A board or steering committee of enthusiastic and dedicated individuals with clearly defined network responsibilities and unhindered opportunities to fulfil those responsibilities is necessary to run a network.
  - The founding board may be a self-nominated board
  - Over the course of 2-3 years, this board should be replaced with an elected board.
  - To ensure sufficient board capacity, a minimum of 7 board members, including a Chair and a Treasurer should be appointed.
  - Recruit board members from different sectors and domains, including research, practice and policy.
- Paid membership requires resources and benefits that can be provided to members in return. These will first need to be built.
  - Set aside some funding for the development of Dutch implementation resources.
  - Let a future board decide questions regarding membership when the foundations of a network have been built, and the status of the network can be reviewed.

Most importantly, all initiators behind the networks have established the networks to promote implementation and the infrastructures these networks have created are helping to enable the change that is needed to push forward the delivery of effective care in routine service settings.

## Appendix 1. Online survey questions

1. General
  - 1.1. What is your name?
  - 1.2. Which network do you represent?
  - 1.3. In short, what is the purpose of your network?
2. Governance
  - 2.1 Is there some kind of facilitating organisation behind the network or are you an independent network?
  - 2.2 How is the network set-up from a legal standpoint?
  - 2.3 How is the leadership of the network organised? Is there a board or a representative organ of the network?
    - 2.3.1 How is this board or representative organ selected?
    - 2.3.2 How often?
    - 2.3.3 How many members does this board or representative organ have?
    - 2.3.4 Which roles do the different members of the representative organ hold?
3. Members
  - 3.1 For whom is your network set up? Who are (potential) members?
  - 3.2 How many members does your network have?
  - 3.3 How can someone become a member of the network?
  - 3.4 What is the role of the members within the network?
4. History
  - 4.1 Who started the network?
  - 4.2 Which effort initially led to setting up this network? (Did it grow from a conference, interest group, etc? Or was it also originally conceived as a network?)
    - 4.2.1 What was the original goal of the effort that led to the network?
    - 4.2.2 When did this effort start?
  - 4.3 When was the network founded?
    - 4.3.1 Why then?
  - 4.4 Did you make any adaptations to your initial goals and efforts to set up the network, based on
    - 4.4.1 The needs of the members the network attracted (*yes/no*)
    - 4.4.2 Financing requirements (*yes/no*)
    - 4.4.3 Other, please explain
5. Finance
  - 5.1 How is the network financed?
  - 5.2 Does the network receive any fiscal support from the government or other bodies?
    - 5.2.1 If so, does the fiscal support target
      - 5.2.1.1 The general operations of the network (*yes/no*)
      - 5.2.1.2 The provision of training opportunities (*yes/no*)
      - 5.2.1.3 Research opportunities within the network (*yes/no*)
      - 5.2.1.4 The monitoring of the network's progresses (*yes/no*)
      - 5.2.1.5 Other, please explain
6. Communications
  - 6.1 How do you advertise your network?
  - 6.2 How and how often do you disseminate information about your network?
7. Activities
  - 7.1 What are the main activities of the network? (i.e., is the network organising conferences, hosting webinars etc.?)
  - 7.2 How is your network connected to other networks and D&I institutes in your country?
  - 7.3 Are there any international collaborations of the network? If so, what status do these international collaboration have on the networks agenda?
  - 7.4 Is the network related to any journals? Which? And how?

8. Barriers, facilitators and lessons learned

8.1 What are the main obstacles in setting up an implementation network?

8.2 What are the main obstacles in running an implementation network?

8.3 What are the main facilitators in setting up an implementation network?

8.4 What are the main facilitators in running an implementation network?

8.5 What are the main lessons learned from setting up an implementation network?

8.6 What are the main lessons learned from running an implementation network?

## Appendix 2. EIC Scientific Secretary Call for Expression of Interest (2018)

### Purpose

The key purpose of the EIC Scientific Secretary is to strengthen the daily operations and long-term development of the EIC. The EIC Scientific Secretary will conduct distinct research tasks; provide secretarial administrative support to the EIC board; and support, facilitate and contribute to network communication and activities such as webinars, conferences, and other events. With this EoI being launched for the first time, the preferred candidate delivering the services will have opportunities to participate in defining the final scope of work agreement.

### Scope of Work

- Research:
  - Conducting rapid, systematic literature reviews addressing research questions focused on implementation science and practice within human services
- Network communication:
  - Curating content for and maintaining the EIC website
  - Curating content for and administering the monthly EIC newsletter
  - Curating content for and administering EIC social media (twitter, LinkedIn)
- Event management:
  - Supporting the organisation of EIC events, including webinars, workshops and conferences
- Secretarial support:
  - Supporting the EIC Chairman of the board in ensuring the smooth functioning of the EIC board and Advisory Committee, including organising, minuting and following up on meetings effectively
  - Managing and maintaining EIC records and administration, including EIC membership databases and finances
  - Answering e-mails, handling EIC correspondence
  - Managing EIC website administration and development
- Other:
  - Working in an integrated way with board members and others as required
  - Managing EIC stakeholder relationships, including funders, European / international institutions, intermediaries
  - Representing the EIC at relevant forums and meetings
  - Other duties as required

### Conditions

- The expected work load equals 3-4 weekly hours but will vary substantially over time.
- At times, work may occur outside of normal work hours
- The planning of work will occur on a monthly basis and be tailored to the candidate's other study / work obligations.
- The preferred candidate will work with the EIC on a freelance basis and invoice the EIC on a monthly basis using the € currency.
- The EIC Scientific Secretary will be paid at an hourly rate of €13.
- The EIC Scientific Secretary will report to the EIC Chairman of the Board.

### Required Competencies

- Services:
  - Knowledge of and commitment to the work of the EIC
  - Documented basic understanding of the field of implementation science and / or related disciplines, e.g. improvement science, knowledge translation and mobilisation
  - Strong commitment to evidence-based practice in human services (health, social welfare, education)
  - High motivation
  - Ability to show initiative, solve problems, analyse and interpret data
  - Demonstrated communication and interpersonal skills including problem resolution and a collaborative teamwork
  - Ability to work independently and in a virtual work environment

- Ability to establish priorities, set and maintain deadlines
- Experience with the conduct of literature reviews, including the use of e.g. Endnote, Covidence, electronic literature databases etc.
- Native-level fluency in oral and written English

Personal:

- Practices with a high level of integrity and professionalism
- Commitment to the ongoing development of a strong team culture
- High levels of motivation and energy
- Eager to participate and contribute to a learning environment
- Ability to be proactive and positive in solving problems

Key Selection Criteria

- Education: Master's degree in health, social science, or related discipline
- Knowledgeable of and experienced in utilising implementation science
- Skilled and experienced in conducting literature reviews
- Ability to work independently and thrive in a primarily virtual work environment
- Evidence of a high level of personal productivity and work impact
- Strong teamwork skills
- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills
- Located in Europe

### Appendix 3. Quick overview networks

Network name	Network founded	N members in July 2020	Paid membership	Legal status
Nordic Implementation Interest Group	June 2013	215	No	No
IMPACT - Swiss Implementation Science Network	15-10-2020	NA	No	No
UK Implementation Society (UK-IS)	18-06-2017	88	Yes	Yes
German Speaking Implementation Association (GSIA)	27-04-2017	67	No	No
Norwegian Network for Implementation Research (NIMP)	22-11-2020	NA	No	No
European Implementation Collaborative (EIC)	26-05-2015	460	No	Yes
Dansk ImplementeringsNetværk (DIN)	30-08-2012	50	Yes	Yes
Implementation Network of Ireland and Northern Ireland	2012	100	No	No

The Netherlands Organisation  
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ZonMw is The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development.

Progress requires research and development. ZonMw funds health research and stimulates use of the knowledge developed to help improve health and healthcare.

ZonMw's main commissioning organisations are the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.