



**“10 YEARS
OF LEADERSHIP,
10 TIMES
THE IMPACT”**

**TO LEAD IS
TO SERVE.
TO SERVE IS
TO SHAPE
THE FUTURE.**

*A tribute to a decade of guidance,
connection and quiet strength*

*Celebrating 10 years of chairmanship
—Christian Fillet*

The ESN family | June 2025

COLOPHON

10 Years of Leadership

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FROM THE ESN FAMILY TO OUR CHAIR

Christian Fillet

**Twenty years of commitment
countless conferences,
high-level seminars, working groups
and expert panels**



Thousands of people met, lives touched, seeds planted. And through it all: one constant. Your leadership.

This publication is a tribute to Christian Fillet, who, since **2015**, has not only chaired the European Social Network (ESN), but helped shape its soul.



With vision, calm presence, and an unwavering belief in the power of people, you've guided us through growth, transition, and transformation.

This book is more than a reflection. It's a gift – a collection of voices, stories, insights and thanks.

A reminder that true leadership leaves a lasting, human imprint.



THE GROWTH OF ESN UNDER YOUR LEADERSHIP



By the numbers

Christian Fillet's voluntary engagement with ESN spans over 20 years, marked by vision, stability, and impact.

Since becoming Chair in 2015, he has steered ESN through major growth—from 4 to 27 active countries, from 120 to over 600 professionals, and from a small secretariat to a Brussels-based team of 20.

His time investment was not just significant—it was transformative. Under his leadership, ESN became the leading voice for public social services in Europe.

OVER THE PAST DECADE



Christian Fillet's journey with the European Social Network is not just a story of longevity—it's a testament to the quiet power of principled, purposeful leadership. For over two decades, Christian has given his time not for status or acclaim, but out of a deep conviction: that strong, well-supported public social services are the backbone of a fair and resilient Europe.

As Chair since 2015, he has guided ESN with unwavering integrity. Never drawn to conflict, never seeking credit, Christian leads by listening, building trust, and always moving toward solutions. In turbulent times—through political shifts, financial pressures, and rising inequality—he became the steady voice in the room. Calm. Just. Honest. His leadership style is defined not by rhetoric, but by results; not by dominance, but by respect.



Under Christian's stewardship, ESN grew—not only in size, but in substance. It became a recognised force in shaping European social policy, trusted by practitioners and policymakers alike. But perhaps his greatest achievement lies in what cannot be measured: the confidence he inspired, the values he upheld, and the quiet belief he instilled in others that real change is possible—if you do the work, stay the course, and never lose sight of why it matters.

By the numbers

- From 4 to 27 countries actively involved
- Over 5,000 participants in events, trainings, and congresses
- ESN membership increased from 120 to 600+ professionals
- 10 international congresses across Europe
- Recognised as a key stakeholder in European social policy dialogue
-



MORE THAN 20 YEARS OF COMMITMENT IN MOTION



He doesn't just lead.

He listens.
He connects.
He cares.

And in doing so, he shows us what
leadership can be — and what social
services should become.

MORE THAN 20 YEARS OF COMMITMENT IN MOTION



Over two decades of unwavering dedication, Christian has become a respected and recognised figure in the European social services landscape.

What began in 2002 as participation in his first congress in Barcelona, evolved into a journey marked by leadership, connection, and advocacy at the heart of the European Social Network (ESN).

From Participant to Chairperson

- **2002** : First congress as a participant – Barcelona
- **2005** : Joined the ESN Board
- **2010** : Took on the role of Treasurer
- Later – Elected Vice-Chair
- **2015** : Became Chairperson – Lisbon

Roles Over More Than Two Decades

- 20+ years as active board member
- 6 years as **Treasurer**
- 4 years as **Vice-Chair**
- 10 years as **Chair**.

In each role, Christian has embodied the core mission of ESN:

*Inspiring social services leaders
to improve the lives of people
in their communities.*



A EUROPEAN - AND GLOBAL - FOOTPRINT

Christian's commitment took him far beyond Belgium. Representing the voice of public social services, he travelled extensively to share knowledge, promote inclusion, and connect local realities with European and international frameworks.

Countries visited (27)

EU Member States (24):

Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Lithuania

Non-EU Countries (3):

United Kingdom, Switzerland, Azerbaijan

North America:

Canada (Quebec, Ontario), USA (Philadelphia)

Cities that Shaped the Story (40+)

Christian engaged in impactful work across major European hubs and beyond:

London, Brighton, Manchester, Dublin, Edinburgh, Stockholm, Malmö, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Wrocław, Warsaw, The Hague, Utrecht, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp, Paris, Bordeaux, Aix-en-Provence, Geneva, Milan, Rome, Bratislava, Budapest, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Cluj, Bucharest, Athens, Valletta, Vienna, Lisbon, Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, Baku, Quebec, Philadelphia



Christian covered an estimated 98,000 kilometres from his home base in Bredene, Belgium – the equivalent of more than two trips around the world – all in service of learning, exchange, and advocacy.



ALIGNED WITH ESN'S MISSION AND VALUES

Throughout his journey, Christian has been a living embodiment of ESN's vision:

*"A challenging advocate
for person-centred, inclusive services.
A hub for learning and exchange.
A platform bridging practice, policy and research."*



Christian's work has championed:

- **Empowerment** of people and communities
- **Inclusion** of people using services and their carers
- **Dignity** and **independence** for all service users
- Evidence-based **innovation** in social work
- **Equality, accessibility** and **collaboration** across sectors

His leadership helped ensure that those **values** were not just stated – but lived.





CHRISTIAN'S LEADERSHIP IN MOTION - GROUNDED, PURPOSEFUL AND PEOPLE- CENTRED

Christian's more than two decades of commitment are not simply a career milestone — they reflect a leadership style shaped by values, connection and care. And while his story is still very much unfolding, his influence is already unmistakable.

At the core of his **vision** lies a powerful belief:

*Social services must be built for everyone
— and must reach
especially those who need them the most*

Christian has always championed inclusive, accessible and citizen-centred services. For him, good policy is not measured by systems, but by people's lives. Services must be designed with, not just for, the people they aim to support. That begins with listening — truly and consistently.



What Defines His Leadership

Christian's style is not loud, but it's profoundly clear. He leads with:

- **Passion** – for people, fairness and doing the right thing
- **Integrity** – he walks the talk, even when no one is watching
- **Collaboration** – believing deeply in working with others, not above them
- **Empathy** – always aware of the people behind the policies
- **Resilience** – never afraid to go the extra mile or push beyond the first “no”

He is someone who inspires by example — not by force, but by consistency, calm, and commitment.



LEADERSHIP GROUNDED IN VALUES

What He Teaches Us

- That leadership doesn't have to be loud to be strong
- His unwavering work ethic
- That we must believe change is possible, and work patiently but persistently toward it
- His talent for finding solutions where others see walls
- That inclusion, dignity and equality are not optional — they are essential
- His quiet but firm determination to go the extra mile
- That small steps matter, especially when taken together
- His ability to create calm, offer support, and carry burdens that aren't his own



He doesn't shout to be heard. He doesn't seek conflict. But when Christian speaks, people listen — because in his steadiness lies strength.

His style is one of quiet authority, marked not by conflict or ego, but by clarity, trust and presence.

The Person Behind the Leader

What makes Christian's leadership so unique is that it's wholeheartedly human. He brings himself fully into the work — not only as a professional, but as a person.

- He's an avid sports enthusiast, always appreciating the value of movement and discipline
- A real Bourgeoisier, he takes joy in a good meal and great company
- His love for music is ever-present — he's got a soundtrack for every moment
- Though he rarely finds the time, he genuinely enjoys doing nothing now and then
- Most of all, he thrives on caring for others — creating calm, offering solutions, and taking worries off people's shoulders

This is what sets him apart: he leads like he lives — attentively, generously, and with quiet strength.

Christian's journey is far from over — and that's exactly what gives it such power.

***He shows us not only what leadership is,
but what it can become.***



COUNTLESS CONFERENCES, HIGH-LEVEL SEMINARS, WORKING GROUPS AND EXPERT PANELS



A map of impact

Across countless conferences, high-level seminars, working groups, and expert panels, Christian Fillet has left a clear and lasting mark. From shaping EU policies to strengthening local practices, his presence has never been symbolic—it has been catalytic. In each forum, he brings people together, translates complexity into clarity, and turns ideas into action. This is not just a record of participation, but a map of impact—a testament to leadership that builds bridges, unlocks potential, and moves social services forward across Europe.





2015 - Lisbon

Working together to improve liFe

Christian has not only championed the theme “Working Together to Improve Life: Social Services”, he has brought it to life throughout every stage of his career. As a leader with natural authority—never forceful, always guiding—he united people around solutions rather than problems. His approach is grounded in a deep respect for human dignity, justice, and thoughtful dialogue. With a keen sense for nuance and a sincere commitment to collaboration, he built bridges between sectors, institutions, and worldviews. Christian does not rely on hope as a driving force, but rather on responsibility, clear thinking, and collective action—values that have made him both a moral compass and a tangible force for renewal in social services.



2016 - The Hague

The Future is local

Christian has long understood that “The Future is Local” is more than a slogan—it’s a guiding principle for meaningful change. Throughout his career, he has championed the power of local communities as the foundation of strong, resilient societies. With his characteristic clarity and sense of purpose, he consistently highlighted how local actors—municipalities, citizens, and grassroots initiatives—are best placed to recognize needs, mobilize support, and drive innovation from the ground up. Christian’s strength lies in empowering those closest to the challenges, trusting in their insight, and connecting their efforts to broader systems. For him, the local is not a limitation, but the launchpad for lasting, scalable impact.





2017: Malta

Transforming lives through innovation and technology

Christian has always seen innovation and technology not as ends in themselves, but as powerful tools to transform lives. Throughout his career, he has championed a human-centered approach to digital progress—one that puts people first and technology in service of dignity, inclusion, and empowerment. Where others saw systems, he saw stories: of vulnerable individuals gaining access, of public services becoming more responsive, of barriers quietly breaking down. With a sharp mind for strategy and a heart tuned to social justice, Christian helped steer innovation toward impact, ensuring that progress was not only smart, but meaningful. For him, true transformation happens when technology meets empathy—and when vision is matched by action.



2018 - Seville

Invest, innovate & transform

Christian has always understood that lasting change doesn't happen by chance—it requires bold investment, thoughtful transformation, and constant innovation. Throughout his career, he has worked at the intersection of vision and action, encouraging institutions to invest not only in systems, but in people. He knows that transformation is never just structural—it's cultural, relational, and deeply human. With a clear focus on impact and a fearless drive for progress, Christian has pushed boundaries while staying grounded in purpose. For him, to invest is to believe in potential, to transform is to challenge the status quo, and to innovate is to build a future that works—especially for those too often left behind.





2019: Milan

striving for quality -from quality of care to quality of life

Christian has always believed that true progress in social services goes beyond metrics—it's about moving from quality of care to quality of life. Throughout his career, he has championed a shift in mindset: from checking boxes to creating real, lasting well-being. For Christian, striving for quality means listening deeply, acting thoughtfully, and designing systems that empower rather than just assist. He understands that care is only meaningful when it respects the individuality, dignity, and aspirations of each person. By raising the bar from procedures to purpose, he has helped redefine what quality truly means—placing humanity at the heart of every policy and practice.



2022 - Hamburg

Rehtinking recovery Reshaping social services with new tools

Christian has never approached recovery as a return to the old, but as an opportunity to rethink, rebuild, and reimagine. For him, rethinking recovery means asking bold questions and embracing new tools to reshape social services for a changing world. Throughout his career, he has challenged systems to evolve—not just to repair what's broken, but to create something better. By integrating digital innovation, community-driven approaches, and fresh thinking, Christian has pushed the sector to move beyond resilience toward true renewal. In his vision, recovery is not a reset—it's a redesign, with people's needs, hopes, and potential at the center.





2023 - Malmö

Advancing social services

For Christian Fillet, advancing social services has never been just about modernization—it's about deepening impact, widening access, and restoring dignity. Throughout his career, he has led with the conviction that social services must evolve in step with society, always responsive to real lives and shifting needs. Whether through policy, innovation, or collaboration, Christian has consistently driven progress that is both strategic and human. He sees advancement not as a technical upgrade, but as a moral commitment to serve better, to reach further, and to ensure that no one is left behind. His leadership has helped shape a sector that is not only more efficient, but more compassionate.



2024 - Antwerp

Co - creating future social services

Christian has always believed that the future of social services cannot be designed behind closed doors—it must be co-created. Throughout his career, he has brought together citizens, professionals, policymakers, and communities to shape solutions collectively, grounded in real experiences and shared ownership. For Christian, co-creating the future means listening as much as leading, building trust across boundaries, and turning dialogue into action. He understands that the most resilient and relevant social services are those built with the people they serve, not just for them. His approach transforms participation into partnership, and vision into lasting, inclusive change.



2025 - Aarhus

Where care meets tech

Christian has always seen the meeting point between care and technology not as a clash, but as a powerful convergence. For him, where care meets tech is where the future of social services is being written—with empathy and innovation working hand in hand. Throughout his career, he has championed technology that enhances, not replaces; that supports professionals and empowers individuals. Christian understands that digital tools are most effective when rooted in human values—dignity, trust, and accessibility. His vision ensures that as services evolve, they remain deeply personal, proving that the heart of care can beat just as strongly in a digital age.



Across countless conferences, high-level seminars, working groups and expert panels, Christian Fillet has emerged not just as a participant, but as a driving force in reshaping the future of social services in Europe. His leadership within the European Social Network (ESN)—as Chair, former Vice-Chair, and trusted strategist—reflects a core conviction: social services are not peripheral to Europe's success—they are central to its humanity.

From Tallinn to Barcelona, from funding forums to social inclusion debates, Christian has brought coherence, clarity, and courage to every table. His voice cuts through jargon, always returning the focus to what matters: people. He doesn't speak for systems—he speaks with those they serve. Whether challenging EU policymakers to see local services as true partners, or empowering professionals with new tools and shared practices, Christian has turned dialogue into progress. His work mirrors the core values of ESN: creating a trusted platform for international exchange, elevating the role of local and regional services, and promoting quality not just in systems, but in the lives they touch. For Christian, innovation means access, policy means empowerment, and co-creation is the only way forward. Where others see process, he sees purpose. And everywhere he goes, he leaves a mark—of leadership that listens, connects, and transforms.



10 QUOTES FOR THE TIME CAPSULE

Ten quotes ...

THAT INSPIRED US,
CHALLENGED US,
AND STAYED WITH US.
CAREFULLY CHOSEN TO REPRESENT
THE VALUES OF THIS JOURNEY -
AND TO BE PASSED ON TO
THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW.



*The mark of a true guide is not
how many follow him,
but how many find their own
path through his example.*

*"Harmony is not the absence
of differences,
but the respectful weaving of
them into
something greater."*



*In calmness lies
true strength.*

*The just man
does not shout.*



*"Le vrai pouvoir,
c'est de mettre
son savoir au service
du bien commun."*

*"El que domina
a otros es fuerte;
el que se domina
a si mismo
es poderoso."*



*"Il ne s'agit
pas de prévoir l'avenir,
mais de le rendre
possible."*



*"Ne juge pas légèrement
les actions des hommes :
loue peu et blâme encore moins :
pense que pour bien juger les
hommes, il faut sonder les cœurs et
scruter les intentions."*

*"A true leader has
the confidence to stand alone,
the courage to make tough
decisions, and the compassion to
listen to the needs of others."*



*"What you do for
yourself
dies with you.
What you do for others
lives forever."*

A black and white photograph of an older man with white hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is smiling and speaking into a microphone. He has a lanyard around his neck with a badge. The background is dark and out of focus. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**IT'S OUR
RESPONSIBILITY
TO DO
THE BEST
WE CAN
TO CHANGE
THE THINGS
WE DON'T LIKE**



VOICES OF GRATITUDE



A unique collection

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS,
EACH ONE PAGE LONG,
WRITTEN BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE WALKED
ALONGSIDE YOU.

FROM DIFFERENT CORNERS OF THE ESN
FAMILY.

THESE LETTERS ARE WARM, REFLECTIVE,
AND FULL OF GRATITUDE.

EACH ONE OFFERS A DIFFERENT WINDOW
INTO THE KIND OF LEADER YOU'VE BEEN.



Dear Christian,

I first met you in the early days of the European Social Network, and from that very moment, it was clear we shared more than just a professional mission—we shared a way of thinking. We spoke of the need to learn from one another, to inspire and be inspired, in order to create meaningful change. That sense of mutual respect and shared purpose laid the foundation for what quickly became a real friendship.

Over the years, I've seen you become the heartbeat of ESN's growth. But what has always stood out to me isn't just your leadership—it's your generosity of spirit. You listen deeply, lead quietly, and bring people together in a way that feels effortless and genuine.

I still remember being in Romania, attending the conference for the third time, and reflecting on how far we had come. I applauded the organisers for raising the profile of the social work profession—and quietly, I knew that your influence was part of that growing recognition across Europe.

Whether it was over a serious policy discussion or a light-hearted chat about football, there was always that same energy between us: connection, trust, and the joy of working toward something bigger than ourselves.

You've been more than a colleague—you've been a teammate. And like any good team, we've known when to push forward, when to hold back, and how to always keep the goal in sight.

I hope we'll catch up again soon—no agenda, just friendship. And maybe a match.

With warmest wishes

Philip Cotterill



Brussel, 14 mei 2025

Beste Christian,

Namens de VVSG willen we je van harte feliciteren en bedanken naar aanleiding van je twintigjarig engagement in het European Social Network, waarvan de laatste tien jaar als voorzitter. Twee decennia lang was je een gewaardeerde stem en een gedreven ambassadeur voor het sociale beleid in Europa. Je bracht mensen en ideeën samen met een vanzelfsprekende rust en helder inzicht – nooit op de voorgrond, maar altijd met impact.

Wat we bijzonder waarderen, is hoe je in die Europese context ook de Vlaamse lokale besturen een gezicht gaf. Je zette hun goede praktijken op het Europese podium en toonde hoe sterk en innovatief lokaal sociaal beleid hier is. Daarmee gaf je onze steden, gemeenten en OCMW's niet alleen erkenning, maar ook zelfvertrouwen en inspiratie. De Vlaamse lokale besturen kunnen zonder schroom hun voet zetten naast de vele goede praktijkvoorbeelden uit het buitenland, alleen toonden we dat te weinig, dat was je boodschap.

Ook in Vlaanderen liet en laat je je sporen na. Als OCMW-secretaris in Willebroek en Brugge, later als adjunct-algemeendirecteur bij de stad Brugge en algemeen directeur bij Welzijnsvereniging Mintus, bouwde je mee aan een mensgericht lokaal sociaal beleid. Je weet bruggen te slaan tussen beleidsniveaus, diensten en mensen. Collega's omschrijven je als een stille kracht: doordacht, verbindend en betrouwbaar. Geen tafelspringer, maar iemand die zijn weg vindt met diplomatie en strategisch inzicht. Een stille genietster ook, die het verschil maakt zonder veel woorden.

Na twintig jaar inzet ben je nog altijd actief, met een scherp oog voor samenwerking, evolutie en nuance. Vanuit je nieuwe thuis aan de Belgische kust – waar rust en horizon elkaar ontmoeten – blijf je bijdragen aan sterk lokaal sociaal beleid, in binnen- en buitenland.

We hopen dat je met voldoening terugblijkt op alles wat je al hebt opgebouwd. Bedankt voor je gedrevenheid, je menselijkheid en je blijvende inzet. De VVSG en de vele collega's met wie je hebt samengewerkt blijven dankbaar verbonden. The best is yet to come!

Met warme groet,

Piet Van Schuylenbergh
Nathalie Debaet

Namens de VVSG
Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten



Athens, 15 May 2025

Christian, my friend with the heart of gold

Some people walk into your life quietly, without fanfare — and yet somehow, they leave a mark that lasts a lifetime.

Christian is one of those people.

I met him many years ago, in the early 2000s, when he was already an important figure at the European Social Network — No. 3, officially.

But for me, and for the entire Greek team, he became our No. 1 from the very first moment.

There was something about him. A presence. He was the one we turned to when we needed guidance, support, or simply a kind word. He was the calm in the chaos, the smile in the crowd. Because Christian never just did his job — he connected.

With honesty. With warmth. With heart.

Thanks to him, our journey with ESN became so much more than a professional collaboration. It became a memory worth keeping. A time we now look back on with deep gratitude.

Years have passed. Life moved on, careers evolved, and Christian, with all his quiet strength, rose even higher. But what touches me most is that despite all the changes, he never changed. He remained Christian — thoughtful, generous, kind. A loyal friend not only to me, but to my whole family. He knew the admiration and respect I carried for him, because he carried them right back. In the most genuine way.

Christian is a giver. A listener. A man who leads without raising his voice, who shines without seeking the spotlight. A loving son. A colleague you can rely on. A friend you keep close — even when life takes you far apart. He's the kind of human being this world quietly needs more of.

And me? I'm just grateful. Grateful that our paths crossed. That friendship grew, and stayed, and bridged the distance between us.

Because in the end — we're Geminis. We understand each other without needing to explain. And yes, we both appreciate a good "I ♥ Athens" T-shirt.

Christian, my friend — congratulations on this beautiful milestone in your career.

May the road ahead bring you joy, fulfillment, and everything your golden heart deserves.

And please, come back to Greece soon.

We miss you more than words can say.

Martha Beis



Brussels, 30 mei 2025

Christian,

In the ongoing work of building a society that leaves no one behind, some voices do more than speak — they listen, elevate, and act. Yours has always done all three.

As Chair of the Network Against Poverty, I've had the honour of walking alongside people with lived experience — individuals and families navigating systems that too often feel distant or indifferent. But just as importantly, I've had the privilege of walking that path with allies like you — people working from within those systems to make them better, fairer, and more humane.

You've never needed convincing that democracy is more than ballots — it's about belonging. That real leadership means not only defending the rights of the many, but amplifying the voices of the few who are rarely heard: people in poverty, people falling through the cracks, people who are tired of shouting into silence.

Nowhere was that more visible than in our shared work on the plan **"No one sleeps on the street against their will"** in Bruges.

Together, we shaped a vision rooted in a simple but radical belief: homelessness is not an accident of fate — it is the result of policy choices, and it can be solved.

Your commitment to this cause was never about optics. It was about outcomes. You stood up for those who had no front door to close at night, and helped ensure they would not be left behind.

Over the years, I've learned a great deal from your example. Your insistence on the quality of social services has never been an abstract policy ideal — it has always been about real lives. You know that dignity begins with access. That a system only works when it works for those who need it most. And you've always worked to ensure exactly that. You never treated people in poverty or without housing as a problem to manage, but as citizens to empower. That's rare — and it's powerful.

As someone once said, "Democracy is not a monologue of authority, but a chorus of voices." You haven't just joined that chorus — you've made space in it. For the single parent lost in paperwork. For the elderly neighbour cut off from care. For the young adult who's stopped expecting help. For the person without a home who deserves better than concrete and cold. You've helped ensure that they are not invisible.

Christian, thank you — for being a steadfast partner, a principled advocate, and a believer in what we fight for every day: that everyone deserves not just a voice, but a future.

With respect, gratitude, and in solidarity,



Chair, Network Against Poverty



Denver, 07 June 2025

Dear Christian,

when I reflect on what defines true leadership in human services, I think of someone who not only sees systems clearly, but sees people first. Someone who leads with heart, humility, and a steady dedication to improving lives. That's you, Christian.

From the start of our collaboration between the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and the European Social Network, I knew I had met a kindred spirit. Though an ocean separates our contexts—different systems, different histories—we quickly discovered how much we shared: the same persistent challenges, the same belief in justice and dignity, and a common conviction that strong social policy begins with strong human connection.

Your leadership has brought coherence to complex European frameworks—but more than that, you've built trust. Across borders and institutions, you've created space for collaboration, bridging divides that once seemed fixed.

And in working together, I didn't just gain a colleague, I gained a friend. You reminded me that international dialogue isn't a luxury; it's essential. That by listening across perspectives, we don't just understand better—we lead better. I hope I've offered some insights in return, even if we continue to spar over wine preferences.

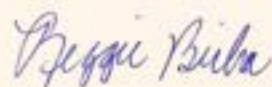
Your leadership doesn't just influence—it connects. You've bridged continents, cultures, and conversations. And you've done it all with humility, wit, and, yes, a great glass of wine in hand. (Though I'll still argue the New World vintages deserve a bit more love.)

But beyond the titles, roles, and accomplishments—which are many—what I value most is your friendship. You're the kind of person who makes space at the table, asks the thoughtful question, and raises a toast not just to what's been achieved, but to what's possible when we work together.

Christian, ten years is an extraordinary milestone. You've shaped not only policy, but people. You've built bridges where others saw distance, and you've done it with a spirit of generosity and clarity that has left a lasting mark—on our field, and on me personally.

Here's to everything you've built, to all that's still ahead, and to one more glass of wine—preferably together, somewhere between Brussels and Denver.

With admiration, respect, and warm friendship,



Reggie Bicha
President & CEO, APHSA



Dear Christian,

I still remember our first meeting in Malmö. It wasn't just another conference, nor just another handshake—it was the start of a genuine connection. I was struck not only by your professionalism, but by your warmth, openness, and natural ability to make people feel seen. Very quickly, we discovered a shared passion: social change, yes—but also a mutual love for sport and the way it brings people together beyond words, borders, or titles.

Throughout your years of service, I have come to admire your rare combination of vision and humility. You never sought the spotlight, but somehow you were always at the center—connecting ideas, people, and institutions. It is exactly this that makes you a true bridge-builder. You bring voices together that would otherwise remain apart. You create spaces for dialogue where silence once lived. And you do it with the quiet confidence of someone who believes more in impact than in ego.

I'm personally grateful for your hospitality and support, especially during our joint work at the conferences in Malmö and Antwerp. Those moments did more than highlight best practices—they helped forge concrete collaboration between Ukraine and the broader European social services community. Thanks to these efforts, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine was encouraged to take meaningful steps toward joining the European Social Network—a process that is now well underway. That is impact. That is legacy.

Your leadership has shown us that building a resilient and inclusive social support system starts with listening—with openness, trust, and shared purpose. I am convinced that the work you've done is not ending—it's multiplying, through the people and partnerships you've helped shape.

I wish you continued success and fulfillment in all that comes next. May the bridges you've built continue to carry others forward, across borders and into futures where dignity, care, and connection remain at the heart of it all.

With great respect and warm regards,

Kostiantyn Koshelenko



Cluj- Napoca, 19 May 2025

Dear Christian,

It's almost impossible to believe that more than fifteen years have passed since our paths first crossed. Time has flown, but the mark you've left on us—and on me personally—feels as vivid and meaningful as ever.

From the very first moment DASM joined the ESN family, your presence was a beacon of encouragement. You believed in our mission. You gave us space to grow, to contribute, to be seen. At every seminar, every conference, every exchange—you welcomed us not just with openness, but with genuine warmth.

What I will always hold close is the way you made people feel.

You listened.

You connected.

You created spaces where everyone felt respected, heard, and included. You built bridges—not just between organisations, but between hearts.

Together, we've shared experiences I'll never forget: organizing international events, bringing experts together across countries, exchanging ideas, hopes, and visions. Each step of the way, there was trust. There was respect.

And there was a sense that we were part of something bigger—something meaningful.

Christian, your leadership has never been about status or recognition.

It has always been about values. Inclusion. Compassion. Solidarity.

You've stood up for the vulnerable. You've made room for innovation. And you've inspired us all to reach higher—not for ourselves, but for the people we serve.

Thanks to you, we've grown. We've improved how we care. We've found better ways to help those who need us most. And in the process, we've become more than colleagues—we've become a community.

When voices trembled, you made sure they were heard. When ideas were still fragile, you nurtured them. And when challenges loomed, you reminded us that together, we are stronger. That's what ESN became under your guidance: a place of learning, of shared strength, of real human connection.

Thank you, Christian. For your vision. Your heart. Your smile.
And for the trust you've shown over all these years.
It has meant more than words can say.

With heartfelt gratitude,



DASM Cluj-Napoca



New York, 07 June 2025

Dear Christian,

Warmest congratulations to you!

It was truly a pleasure to meet you at the APHSA Summit. Our conversation left a lasting impression on me—not only because of your extensive career in social services, but also because of your passion and vision as Chair of the European Social Network. Hearing your insights into the European landscape as we collectively work toward global solutions for our most vulnerable communities was deeply inspiring.

I especially appreciated the time we shared outside the sessions. That chance to connect on a personal level helped shape a friendship that, wonderfully, now spans continents. And when you jokingly called me your “American girlfriend,” I must admit—I smiled for the rest of the day. In that small, lighthearted moment, you made me feel seen, appreciated, and genuinely connected. That’s a rare and beautiful quality.

Even in the short time we spent together, it was clear that your dedication to serving others runs deep. Over the past decade, you’ve led with not just skill and purpose, but with kindness and heart. That combination is powerful—and it shows. Your work has changed lives, and your leadership continues to inspire those around you.

The European Social Network is fortunate to have someone of your caliber at its helm. I have no doubt your continued leadership will drive lasting, positive change across the continent and beyond.

Enjoy the celebration of your remarkable journey. I’m honored to have crossed paths with you—and to have contributed, however modestly, to this chapter of your story.



With deep respect and warm admiration,
Donna Jarvis-Miller, CMP, CEM
Event & Meeting Planner Extraordinaire



Brugge, 22 mei 2025

Beste Christian,

Van Milaan tot Malmö, van Hamburg tot Aarhus, de afgelopen jaren bracht onze ESN-reis ons samen van de ene exotische bestemming naar de andere.

Ons eerste ESN-congres in Milaan staat ons nog levendig bij. We herinneren ons hoe we met veel enthousiasme – koortsachtig op zoek naar een foulard in de juiste kleur – onze aandacht lieten afdwalen van het congresprogramma; meer dan 30.000 stapjes hebben we die dag gezet. Tranen komen ons in de ogen als we terugdenken aan het onvergetelijke diner met de vegetarische zalm met spinazie op Mechelse wijze. Maar wat ons het meest is bijgebleven is het moment waarop je in je mooiste kostuum aan ons als "The Chair" werd voorgesteld en we met verbazing zagen hoe heel Europa jou leek te kennen. Dat moment maakte indruk; het liet zien dat jouw betrokkenheid en leiderschap verder reiken dan jouw professionele rol als adjunct-algemeen directeur van de stad en als algemeen directeur van Mintus in Brugge.

In de jaren daarna hebben we vanop de eerste rij gezien hoe je een langetermijnvisie belichaamt en actief de ontwikkelingen in de zorg- en welzijnssector volgt, in de jou gekende stijl: een leider die ook ruimte geeft aan anderen en de menselijke connectie nooit uit het oog verliest, troeven waarmee je ook in Mintus een cultuur van betrokkenheid en innovatie wist te creëren. Als voorzitter van het Europees Sociaal Netwerk overstijgt jouw focus nationale grenzen, waardoor je een ware autoriteit bent binnen de branche. Jij belichaamt een combinatie van authenticiteit, warmte en sociale betrokkenheid die velen inspireert.

Vandaag willen we jou bedanken voor de vele successen, de ongeëvenaarde inzet en de passie waarmee jij de zorg- en welzijnswereld in Brugge en in Europa blijft transformeren. Christian, jouw engagement voor ESN heeft OCMW Brugge en Mintus Europees op de kaart gezet.

Moge je de komende jaren blijven inspireren, bouwen en verbinden.

Met dankbaarheid en bewondering,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pablo & Steven". The script is elegant and cursive, with the names connected by an ampersand.

Pablo Annys & Steven Wittevrongel

Dear Christian,

In conjunction with the celebration of two significant milestones in your illustrious journey: your 10-year anniversary as chair of ESN and your 20-year tenure on the board, I would like to contribute with some reflections more on the personal side than the professional.

Your leadership has been instrumental in guiding ESN from its roots in Brighton to its current home in Brussels. This journey has not only been about geographical relocation but also about the transformation and growth of the organization under your engaged involvement. Your vision and dedication have been important forces behind ESN's evolution and success.

During my time on the board with you, we have shared the responsibilities and challenges of board duties, but these years have also been enriched with social and personal moments that have fostered a deep bond between us. One notable aspect is our mutual interest in football, which has been a common area of interest. I remember the nights in the Hague watching the Euros in 2016 – and the remarkable achievements of Wales! Your support when I suddenly lost my partner last June was of great comfort and support that I will forever cherish.

I have also had the pleasure of learning about Belgian beer and brewing, thanks to your enthusiastic guidance, and we have explored some of the finest drinking establishments in Brussels together. Among these, our memorable visits to places like 'A La Morte Subite' stand out, where we enjoyed a laugh and engaging conversation. Hearing stories about your childhood and school days in Brussels has been a testament to your rich and fascinating life journey.

Your humility, unwavering belief in and respect for humanity, and your ability to connect with people from all walks of life are qualities that make you a remarkable individual. You have been the flagship of the board at conferences and international events, representing ESN with grace, dignity, and a profound sense of purpose.

As we celebrate these milestones, we recognize that your journey with ESN is far from over. The road ahead is filled with opportunities and challenges that will undoubtedly benefit from your continued wisdom and leadership. Christian, thank you for your exceptional contributions, for being a steadfast colleague, and for embodying the very essence of what it means to lead with heart and conviction. Here's to many more milestones on this extraordinary journey.

With deep appreciation

Graham Owen



Vilvoorde, 1 mei 2025

Dear Christian,

They say, in ancient Greece, that true friendship is not born of necessity, nor of convenience, but of a shared pursuit of the good, the true, and the beautiful. Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that our friendship began far from home, in the rain-soaked streets of Gaudí's Barcelona, during the 2002 ESN conference – a gathering of those who believed, stubbornly and tenderly, in a better world.

There you stood – Flemish, smiling, reserved and, as I would later learn, possessed of a quiet iron will. The journey we began that day has been long, winding, and – in the finest Greek tradition – rich with *xenia*, the sacred bond between friends and guests.

You missed but one conference, in Venice, 2003 – though we later reconciled this minor aberration with a sweltering summer workshop on one of Venice's islands, where the air was heavy with history, and where our paths crossed again with our dear English companion, Philip Cotterill.

In those early years, when Eric Wauters carried the torch for VVOS on the ESN Board, and I was yet preparing to follow, it became clear that your hands – steady and measured – were needed on the ship's wheel. When the Treasurer's post fell vacant, the gods themselves, I believe, must have whispered: "Christian." Between 2008 and 2014, we became seasoned travelers to Brighton, the then beating heart of ESN. Those journeys, those hours of talking and sometimes simply sitting in companionable silence, were among the finest gifts the road has ever given me. As the Stoics teach us: "Travel and change of place impart new vigor to the mind" – and, I might add, to friendship.

Your rise to Vice-Chair in 2012, and to Chair in 2015, seemed less an ambition fulfilled than a natural unfolding, as a tree bends toward the sun. In Lisbon, with the Flemish delegation like a small army behind you, we celebrated not a conquest, but a coronation of trust.

Now, as you stand at the threshold of your tenth year as Chair, you are no longer merely a leader; you are a steward of something greater than yourself. Under your guidance, ESN has blossomed: over 180 members, more than 40 countries, a Secretariat of 20 dedicated souls in Brussels – a true polis, a city of service. Christian, the ancient Greeks revered the *phronimos* – the wise and virtuous man who knows how to steer the ship of life through calm and storm. To me, and to many others, you have been precisely that: not merely a captain, but a companion, a steadfast friend whose presence made the journey lighter, richer, and far more human.

With gratitude, admiration, and affection –

Luc Kupers

A WORD FROM THE CEO -

Alfonso Lara Monterero

Dear Christian,

As you reach this amazing 10-year mark as Chair of the European Social Network, I just want to take a moment to say the biggest possible thank you— not just on behalf of the organisation, but from me.

Your legacy of leadership over the last decade is enduring. You have been a steady hand through change, a great shoulder in challenging times, and a passionate champion for ESN, our people and our work. It has been a true privilege to work with you.

I have cherished your strategic demur and judgment, as well as your kindness and support in difficult times like the Covid-19 crisis, when we went together through several challenges.

Your help in those particularly challenging times was key to help us get through. I also remember travelling together to numerous events that we have shared all over Europe. Those moments were not just professional highlights but also reminders of our joint work and alignment with the purpose and mission of our Network. I should also like to thank you for the time and energy that you have been devoting during these years to ESN, which is essential to ensure that our leadership help us move the organisation forward at all levels.

We are now stronger, have more confidence, and are more ambitious thanks to our joint belief in what we do and who we are.

Many thanks for all that you have done, your advice and support, but surely there is much more to come.

This has been a decade of actual impact and I am very much looking forward to our next chapter.

Warmest regards,

Alfonso Lara-Montero Chief Executive Officer





TEN YEARS, TEN PRINCIPLES



EACH NUMBER TELLS A STORY.
FROM 1 TO 10, FROM SPARK TO LEGACY —
THESE TEN YEARS AS CHAIR OF THE
EUROPEAN SOCIAL NETWORK REFLECT
NOT ONLY TIME, BUT VALUES.

TEN YEARS IN WHICH ONE PERSON,
CHRISTIAN FILLET, SHAPED THE SOUL
OF A NETWORK. TEN YEARS IN WHICH
EVERY NUMBER TELLS A STORY OF
GROWTH, CHALLENGE, AND QUIET
TRANSFORMATION.

CHRISTIAN'S JOURNEY IS WRITTEN IN
NUMBERS — AND IN THE QUIET STRENGTH
BEHIND THEM.





The Beginning

After a decade of active service within the European Social Network, Christian stepped forward.

One voice, one decision, one leader ready to carry the vision further.

With steady resolve, he became a pioneer in shaping social policy across Europe. It started — as all great changes do — with a spark.

The Bridge Builder

For Christian, leadership is never a solo act.

From the beginning, he listened, included, connected.

Two represents dialogue, cooperation, and trust — values that have defined his every move.



Progress through Presence

Three reflects the harmony of thought, emotion, and action.

Christian leads with balance — clear in thought, calm in feeling, and courageous in doing.

His leadership moves things forward without making noise.



The Foundation Layer

Four stands for structure, stability, and trust. Under Christian's guidance, ESN didn't just grow — it matured.

He built solid ground beneath diverse voices, creating space where confidence and collaboration could thrive.

The Quiet Reformer

Five brings change — not chaos. Christian embraces change with care, knowing when to move and when to hold. He leads with flexibility, not frenzy. For him, progress is steady, considered, and grounded in purpose.



The Caregiver

Six represents care, balance, and responsibility. Christian leads with heart. He uplifts people and organisations alike, always attuned to their wellbeing. Across Europe, this sense of care has become one of his most powerful legacies.





The Reflective Mind

Seven is the number of wisdom. Christian is not a man of many words, but when he speaks, it matters. He thinks before acting, reflects before deciding. And in doing so, he brings depth and direction to everything he touches.

The Quiet Force

Eight, turned sideways, becomes the symbol of infinity. So too with Christian's influence — understated but enduring. He doesn't chase attention; he builds impact. His leadership is not loud, but lasting.



The Humanist

Nine speaks to compassion, justice, and vision. Christian leads not for power, but for people. His belief in trust, fairness, and the common good runs deep. He is, at heart, a humanist — and that's what makes him a true president of ESN.



A Decade Complete

*Ten is the number of completion.
A full circle — not as closure, but
as a gateway to a new chapter.
Christian's decade of leadership
is a foundation for the future:
rooted in wisdom, shaped by
experience, and lit by the fire of
justice*

Thank you, Christian,

*for ten years of steady hands, open heart,
and relentless quiet purpose.*

*The flame you've carried still burns —
and it lights the path ahead.*





THANK YOU



THANK YOU, CHRISTIAN.
FOR YOUR WISDOM.
YOUR PATIENCE.
YOUR BELIEF IN PEOPLE.
AND FOR HELPING US BUILD
SOMETHING THAT LASTS.



MERCI. DANKE. GRACIAS. GRAZIE.
EFCHARISTÓ. TAK. DĚKUJI. OBRIGADO.
HVALA. KÖSZÖNÖM. GO RAIBH MAITH
AGAT. GRAZZI. DANK U. DZIĘKUJĘ.
MULTUMESC. ĐAKUJEM. NAJLEPŠA HVALA.
DĚKUJI. BEDANKT. MERCI. БЛАГОДАРЯ.
EFCHARISTÓ. AĆŠIŪ. THANK YOU. DANKE
VIELMALS. TŞƏKKÜR EDİRƏM. THANK YOU.

FEW WORDS CARRY AS MUCH WEIGHT ACROSS BORDERS
AND CULTURES AS A SIMPLE THANK YOU.
AND TODAY, ACROSS EUROPE AND BEYOND, WE UNITE
OUR VOICES IN ONE MESSAGE: THANK YOU, CHRISTIAN.



A Chronicle of Commitment

Across more than two decades of service, one thread runs constant: **Christian Fillet's quiet, determined leadership.**

From Brussels to Bruges, from boardrooms to policy forums, he has helped shape the social fabric of Europe—not with fanfare, but with focus.

Dozens of high-level seminars, working groups, expert panels, and conferences—each one approached as more than an event.

For Christian, they were moments to connect people, learn deeply, ask better questions, and steer social services toward what matters most: people.

From Brussels to Bruges: A Life of Purpose

Born in Brussels in 1962, Christian graduated with a law degree from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel in 1986. He began his career at the OCMW in Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, where his commitment to social justice took root. It wasn't just policy he cared about—it was people.

Systems, he believed, should serve them. Not the other way around.

In **Willebroek**, he honed his expertise in non-profit management and social law. First as financial administrator, then as secretary of the OCMW, he built structures that worked—but also listened.

In 2014, he brought that same ethos to **Bruges**, where he became first secretary of the OCMW, and later the Deputy Director of the city of Bruges, with one clear ambition: ***to make it a model of excellence in Flanders.***

Not just efficient, but empathetic.



Building a Network with Heart

By the time he was elected Chair of ESN in 2015—after years as Treasurer and Vice-Chair—Christian had already laid the groundwork for something bigger than a role. He was building a culture. Under his leadership, ESN grew to encompass 163 members across 35 countries. Not through expansion for its own sake, but through connection. Christian believed networks should breathe—should carry meaning, not just membership. He championed trust, peer learning, and open dialogue. He made space for difference, welcomed complexity, and believed that the best solutions often come from those closest to the ground. Thanks to his vision, ESN became not just a European network—but a human one.



Someone Has to Lead the Field. It Might as Well Be Us

In a field where urgent needs compete daily with limited resources, and where policy meets the personal, one truth stands out: someone has to lead the field. It might as well be us. You didn't just understand that idea—you embodied it. You showed that leadership in social services is not a slogan but a responsibility.

And at every step, you reminded us of the importance of having a clear compass: a set of shared values and direction that anchor our actions, even in times of uncertainty.



You stepped forward with clarity and compassion—and brought others with you.

Your contribution to social services across Europe has been nothing short of remarkable. With tireless commitment and razor-sharp insight, you helped shape ESN into the beating heart of innovation, connection, and integrity in the sector.

You did not simply participate in the work; you elevated it.

As Benjamin Franklin once said, **"Well done is better than well said."**

Your leadership style was never about grandstanding, but about action. You rolled up your sleeves, navigated complexity, and made things happen—building trust across borders, between sectors, and among professionals whose shared mission is improving lives.

Listening First. Always.

Within ESN, you turned strategy into solidarity. You gave the network a soul—championing peer learning, listening carefully to members, and ensuring that the voices of practitioners were not just heard, but amplified at policy tables.

You believed deeply in the principle that those closest to the challenges hold the keys to the solutions.





This was not a symbolic gesture, but a guiding conviction: that the expertise of lived experience is indispensable.

Through this approach, ESN became more than a network of professionals—it became a platform where people who are too often spoken about finally had the chance to speak for themselves.

Because of you, that voice was heard—and respected—where it matters most: in the places where decisions are made.

More Than a Network

Under your guidance, flagship initiatives found their footing and flourished. Your fingerprints are on every successful forum, every policy shift that echoed with field expertise, every new connection between cities, regions, and national authorities. In countless ways, you made ESN not just a network, but a community.

But what is perhaps even more inspiring than your achievements is the spirit in which you delivered them.

Your engagement was entirely voluntary. In a time when commitment is often conditional, your dedication was absolute.

You gave your time, your expertise, your presence—freely, generously, and consistently.

There is something uniquely powerful about voluntary leadership. It is rooted not in obligation, but in belief. Not in status, but in service.

Christian, you showed us that when leadership is driven by values, its impact is both deeper and longer lasting.

From coordinating with local authorities to engaging with EU institutions, to ensuring that social services never fell off the radar during times of crisis, you were always there. Calm, clear, and committed.

To borrow once more from Franklin: ***"Energy and persistence conquer all things."***

You have embodied both.



Leadership Without Ego

Those of us who had the privilege to work alongside you know that your legacy is not just in what you built, but in how you made people feel. Respected. Trusted. Valued.

This tribute is not a farewell, but a celebration.

A celebration of two decades of voluntary excellence. Of service without ego. Of leadership that puts people first.

And still, beyond the meetings and milestones, something deeper lingers. As you once said: leadership is not about what lasts forever. It's about individual voices—different people—coming together, just for a moment.



And that moment, when it happens, is harmony. That's what ESN has been for you: not just a title or a role, but a space where differences found rhythm—where people came together to make something greater than themselves. A breath of shared purpose, fleeting yet unforgettable.

The People Who Walked Alongside

That harmony was sustained not just by your commitment, but by the people who walked alongside you—at home, in life, and in spirit. To your family and loved ones, we owe deep gratitude. Because behind every moment of public leadership, there were unseen hours, shared burdens, and constant support. We especially remember the two remarkable women who shaped your life and values.

Your **mother**, a woman of immense strength, warmth, and wisdom, who passed away on 8 March 2025—International Women's Day. A day that celebrates courageous women across the world feels all the more meaningful, knowing it now holds her memory. She raised you after the early death of your father, and did so with unrelenting grace, resilience, and love.

She carried the weight of the world so that you could grow into a man of conviction and care—teaching you empathy, purpose, and the quiet power of responsibility.

We are convinced she is incredibly proud of the path you have walked, and the lives you have touched.



And your **godmother**, who played a vital role throughout your childhood and remains a deeply important figure in your life today. With quiet constancy and unconditional support, she became another pillar of trust, care, and wisdom—a voice of encouragement that never faded.



Their legacy lives on in your compassion, your resilience, and your unwavering belief in human dignity.

To your **partner**, who stood by through every late-night draft, every journey, and every joyful return—thank you. Your presence was not only loyal but profound—seen and unseen, always steady. You were his confidant, his compass, and his sounding board when words were hard to find. Your love and insight gave him clarity, even in moments of great pressure.

We also extend our deep appreciation to **your closest friends**—many of whom began as colleagues but, over the years, became so much more. You were his mirrors, his truth-tellers, his safe spaces. You challenged, encouraged, and stood beside him, often in the quiet background, always with care. You helped him stay grounded, human, and whole.





And to your **broader family and friends**, we owe a heartfelt thanks. For the many evenings and weekends when Christian was away, investing time, energy, and heart into this network. Your patience, your pride, and your quiet sacrifices helped make his leadership possible.

This journey was his—but never his alone.

A Legacy That Endures

Christian, you've often joked that ten years in this role turned you from a winded young man into a graceful young stallion. If that's true, then what we've witnessed is transformation through purpose—proof that leadership, when rooted in heart, only grows stronger with time.

Christian, thank you for walking the talk. Thank you for lifting others up. Thank you for making Europe's social services stronger, smarter, and more connected.

***Merci. Danke. Gracias.
Grazie. Efcharistó. Tak.
Děkuji. Obrigado.
Hvala. Köszönöm.
Go raibh maith agat.
Grazzi. Dank u.
Dziękuję.***

***Mulțumesc. Ďakujem.
Najlepša hvala. Děkuji.
Bedankt. Merci.
Благодаря. Efcharistó.
Aćšiū. Thank you.
Danke vielmals.
Tşəkkür edirəm.***

Thank you.

We will carry your example forward.

With deepest respect

The ESN Family



The ESN Family

The names included in this tribute represent only a small part of the rich professional and personal journey Christian has travelled. We've done our very best to gather the names of those who, in one way or another, have helped shape this story—colleagues, companions, fellow believers in better social services.

But a full list of everyone he has met, inspired, collaborated with, or shared a meaningful moment with would run into the thousands—and filling an entire publication with names alone, while deserved, would be a monumental task in itself.

To those whose names are not mentioned, please accept our sincere apologies. Your contribution is no less valued. Every connection left a mark. Every conversation mattered.

And every person helped carry this shared work forward.

Lärs Goran Jansson, Philip Cotterill, Grace Hou, Tine Rostgaard, Luc Kupers, Muriel Dupuis, Reggie Bicha, Laura Moens, Nathalie Dessein, Marc Suyskens, Pieter Vanderstappen, Jessica Garon

Christian Bason, Shirly Ovaere, Farid Mammadov, Katarina Ivanković Knežević, John Bolton, Nathalie Berger, Adriana Masgras, Pieter Demyttenaere, Gert Deryckere,

Daria Boklan, Fariborz Pakseresht, Muriel Van Poelvoorde, Natacha Waldmann, Bart Michielsens, Annemie Baetsle, Colin Beheydt, Tom Meeuwus, Marta Beis, Gitte Laenen, Oscar Planells, Jan Maessen,

Joëlle Eggermont, Sheila Poole, Bekir Isik, Martha Beis, Jo Briers, Bruno De Brabandere, Tim Brohee, Shirley Van Ovaere, Peter Vanaken, Monica Deconnick

Vesa Latifi, Crina Moisa, Maarten François, Ann Labijn, Peter Cousaert, Carlos Santor Guerra, Ann Vanden Wyngaerd, Griet Briels, Steven Witteurongel, Laura Moens, Tom Van den Broele, Laurens Debonne, Frank Remy, Ann Van Dycke, Daria Boklan, Annemie Baetsle, Jo Briers

Pascal Cockhuys, Alain Timmermann, Bettina Paeps, Peter Hardy, Eva Fumagallo, Nathalie Debast, Jan Dewae, Stéphane Michelakakis, Leen Vandenbulcke, Donna Jarvis - Miller, Alexandra Bartelds, Pascal Feys, Joke Van Dyck, Kelly Kennedy Garcia, Koen Wuyts, Katarina Ivankovic Knezevic, Bart Denys, Begüm Dereli, Lotte Van Liefde, Maarten De Jaeghere

Cies Ghysen, Piet Van Schuylenbergh, Stéphane Michelakakis, Crina Moisa, Veronica Janssens, Jan Timmermann, Georgia Chimbani, Christian Bodewig,

Piet Van Wambeke, Alfred Grixti, Veerle Van Vynckt, Joke Vanreppelen, Martine Meganck, Mathias Vaes, Arianna Cicogna, Zorana Uzelac, Veerle Vanlook, Arnoud Lopez, Luc Jolie, Zorana Uzelac, Philip De Caene, An Van Dycke, Birgit Sannes,

Alfred Grixti, Inés Suñer, Oscar Planells, Marc Suyskens, Philip Decaene, Sheila J. Poole, Joëlle Eggermont, Gitte Laenen, Graham Owen, Liesbet Van Valckenborgh, An Van Dycke, Geert Boeren, Laurens De Bonne, Hugo Stevens, Nastasja Veraert, Laura Moens, Frank De Baere, Jakob Decavel...



A FINAL WORD...



CHRISTIAN SHOWED US THAT
TRUE LEADERSHIP IS NOT
ABOUT BEING IN CHARGE,
BUT ABOUT MAKING PEOPLE
FEEL THEY MATTER
— AND THAT'S WHAT LASTS.



A FINAL WORD

There is no single way to honour someone like Christian.
No single format that could ever contain the depth of his work, the reach of his words, or the quiet ripple of his presence.

But we hope this tribute comes close.
We hope it carries something of the calm clarity with which he speaks. Something of the trust he offers so easily.
Something of the way he makes people feel seen, even when the room is full.
We didn't create this to sum things up. Because a story like his can't be wrapped up —it continues through the people he's influenced, the conversations he started, the bridges he built that still carry others forward.

What we did create is a mirror — a reflection of the legacy he's shaped over two decades.

One built not on spotlight, but on substance.
Not on moments, but on momentum.
Christian once said that real impact isn't always visible —that it lives in what others go on to do, long after the meeting ends, the policy changes, the project wraps.

This is our way of saying: we saw it.
We felt it.
And we'll carry it forward.

For Christian.
For those who walk beside him.
And for everyone still building, still believing, still choosing connection over recognition.

Because in the end, leadership isn't about being followed.
it's about what you leave behind in others.

And Christian — you've left behind more than you know.

Team "Caberdouche"
Luc Guy - Paul,
Jan & Pascale



A LETTER TO YOURSELF,



WHAT DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU AFTER TEN YEARS?

WHAT DO YOU LEAVE BEHIND?

AND WHAT BEGINS RIGHT HERE?

WE CLOSE THIS BOOK WITH A BLANK PAGE –

SPACE FOR YOUR OWN FINAL NOTE.

A LETTER TO YOURSELF, TO YOUR SUCCESSOR, OR

SIMPLY TO THE NEXT CHAPTER.

BECAUSE LEADERSHIP DOESN'T END. IT EVOLVES.

AND YOUR STORY WILL KEEP TRAVELLING

– IN PEOPLE, IN PRACTICE,

IN PURPOSE.



"Someone has to lead the field
—and we're grateful
it's someone like you,
Christian!"



