

NEAR NEWSLETTER  
2026 – MARCH

## NEAR – Spring 2026 Edition

Looking back on NEAR in Belgium: **Three Days of Learning and Exchange** in January 2026, Mechelen, Belgium, hosted an exciting **NEAR Professional Exchange** — three days full of learning, dialogue and reflection involving policymakers, social and health care professionals and partners from across Europe. Together we explored key themes at the heart of the transition to **person-centred and community-based care**, shared experiences, and connected regional practice with policy insights.

Participants deepened their understanding of topics such as **goal-oriented care**, informal caregivers, **compassionate communities**, and **health-oriented organisations** and gained inspiration from visits and exchanges that brought practice to life in both local and interregional contexts.

In addition, the Finnish delegation carried out visits to several organisations as part of a **pilot action** focused on health-literate organisations, further grounding our discussions in real-world practice.



Visit to an elderly care center 'Bosbeekhof', Belgium (21/01/2026)

You can read the full event report on the NEAR website.

## GOOD PRACTICES TO INSPIRE CHANGE

Over the past months, NEAR partners have identified a range of **good practices**, tested solutions that can help regions and organisations innovate their care and social service approaches. Here are some examples that stand out and inspire further exploration:

### Peer Coaches and Peer Instructors in Disability Services

In this approach, trained **peer coaches** work alongside traditional work coaches or instructors in supported employment and activity centres. By involving peers who have lived experience, the practice supports empowerment, improves engagement, and enriches the learning of professionals working in disability services.

### Systemic Practice Training in Child Protection and Family Support

This good practice focuses on implementing a **systemic practice model** in child protection and family social work. Professionals receive structured training twice a year, strengthening skills to understand complex family dynamics and to support families in ways that are more holistic and effective.



### Kids' Dialogue — Constructive Dialogue in Schools

A model designed to promote constructive dialogue among school pupils, empowering them to express their thoughts and experiences on current issues and building their social and communication skills.

### Experiences of Social Inclusion Scale (ESIS)

A valuable tool developed to assess self-reported experiences of social inclusion. ESIS helps professionals measure how individuals feel included in society — providing important information to shape better social policies and support systems.



## EXPLORE MORE & GET INSPIRED

These good practices are just a selection of what the NEAR project has gathered. Each practice holds different insights that can help inform training, policy and practice across regions — from strengthening professional skills to improving measurement of social outcomes and community engagement.

- ➔ Discover the full collection of NEAR good practices on the project website. Stay Tuned for More Updates

In the coming months we will continue to share insights from NEAR activities — including follow-up reflections from the professional exchange in Belgium and progress on pilot actions such as health-literate organisations.