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Abstract <p>The Social and Welfare Centres of Expertise are a new development in the Finnish social field. Their operations were established permanently in 2002. The centres of expertise were established to develop the practical customer social work as well as research and education. The East Finland Social and Welfare Centre of Expertise is one of the nine social and welfare centres of expertise in Finland. It operates in four provinces, Kainuu, North Karelia, North Savo and South Savo. The ISO-association operates as a background association for ISO.</p> <p>The purpose of this study was to find out the ISO-association's community members' opinions on the services and operations of the East Finland Social and Welfare Centre of Expertise. The research was conducted in May 2006 as a survey research by using both primary and secondary data and mailed questionnaires were sent to nearly all (to 60 out of 65) the community members of the ISO-association. The number of responses was 35. Thus, the response rate was 58.3%. Both qualitative and quantitative questions were asked.</p> <p>The results of the study indicate that during the years of operating, ISO has clearly established its position as an important player in the development of the social sector. The feedback from the ISO-members shows the need for a unifying factor that helps the different players in the social field to form co-operation networks and inform about timely issues in the social sector. ISO has contributed significantly to these operations.</p> <p>However, ISO is only at the beginning of its life cycle. In the rapidly changing society, ISO will be facing challenges constantly trying to balance between the resources and the requirements. Not only is it important to listen to the experts who are carrying out the practical work in the field and the research and educational activities, but to continue to do that. This way ISO will be aware of where they are right now and where they should be next.</p>		
Keywords East Finland Social and Welfare Centre of Expertise, social sector, services, development networks, member questionnaire		
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