

April 2025

European Consumer Debt Network Newsletter



Welcome to the April edition of our newsletter!

First of all,







Happy Easter from all of us at ECDN!

May this time of renewal inspire kindness, connection, and fresh energy throughout your personal and professional lives.

We are excited to share the latest updates and valuable insights from our community.



In this edition:

-  Highlights from the SPES Workshops in Perugia
-  Financial Readiness for Life- financial literacy course for students at ATU in Ireland
-  Letter from Italy: Challenges Faced by Over-Indebted People in Spring 2025 – The Perspective of Jimmy Greslin, Legge3
-  From Awareness to Action: ADICAE's Commitment to Financial Education and Sustainability in Spain in 2024
-  Penno 3.0 - Free financial coach from Finland
-  Overview of events for debt advisors/debt counsellors in Europe - IFF Conference





Ordine degli Avvocati di Perugia

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SPES WORKSHOPS IN PERUGIA

From March 31 to April 3, 2025, a series of workshops was held in Perugia as part of the SPES project, co-financed by the Erasmus+ Programme. The event was hosted by the Bar Association of Perugia and convened a distinguished group of professionals, experts, and civil society representatives, all committed to addressing the pressing issue of over-indebtedness. The event created a space for open discussion and knowledge sharing among professionals from sectors such as law, finance, healthcare, social work, and academia.

Representing the ECDN were delegates from MABS (Ireland), SKEF (Poland), NVVK (Netherlands), and ECDN President Dieter Korczak. Many local stakeholders took part in the event, including social activists, university staff, lawyers from the local OCC, municipal officials from Perugia, and representatives of non-profit organizations such as Caritas, the Italian Red Cross, the Association of Consumers Unions (UNC Umbria), and the Umbria Foundation for the Prevention of Usury. The group also included healthcare professionals working with gambling-related issues (Servizio Aziendale per il Trattamento del Disturbo da Gioco d’Azzardo), as well as financial experts from the Bank of Italy and the local branch of Banca Ethica.





Ordine degli Avvocati di Perugia



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SPES WORKSHOPS IN PERUGIA

Day 1: Setting the Stage

The first day focused on presenting the objectives of the study visit and offering a concise overview of Italy's legal remedies for over-indebtedness and the current training framework for crisis managers. Representing ECDN, Dieter Korczak and Gwen Harris introduced an early draft of the risk index, one of the key tools being developed as part of the SPES project.

Day 2: Listening to Local Voices

The second day was dedicated to Umbrian organizations that shared invaluable insights into the local realities of debt and poverty. Participants learned about available support mechanisms, listened to stories from the frontlines, and gathered the needs and experiences of social workers, volunteers, financial educators, and debt support practitioners. It was a day full of empathy, reflection, and mutual learning – a strong reminder that real solutions need to be based on the real-life experiences and needs of people struggling with debt. For many participants, it was a valuable and eye-opening lesson that showed the gaps in the support system and the frustration that advisors often feel when trying to help those with serious financial problems.

Days 3 & 4: Co-Creating Solutions

The final two days focused on co-developing the project's core tools, including the risk index and training courses for both people in debt and the professionals supporting them. International partners shared their best practices: NVVK detailed their counseling procedures; MABS presented their onboarding course for debt advisors; and SKEF introduced their social worker training initiatives. Discussions also explored how lessons from the PEPPI Academy and ECDN's training concept could be adapted for the Umbrian context. On the last day, great budgeting tools available in Italy were presented. The material can be found at the link:

<https://economiepertutti.bancaditalia.it/calcolatori/calcolatore-del-budget/>



Ordine degli Avvocati di Perugia



FINANCIAL READINESS FOR LIFE - FINANCIAL LITERACY COURSE COURSE FOR STUDENTS AT ATU IN IRELAND

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and Atlantic Technological University (ATU) in Ireland have come together to address **student financial well-being** by developing a free online course called Financial Readiness for Life. The course aims to equip students with **essential financial literacy skills** to navigate college life and beyond.

The Financial Readiness for Life course is the first of its kind in Ireland, targeting higher education students and those preparing to go to third level. It provides an **accessible and interactive platform for students to develop critical financial skills**.

The course covers five key learning outcomes:

Needs, Wants & Sustainable Spending – Understanding the difference between essential and discretionary spending while promoting responsible and sustainable financial habits.

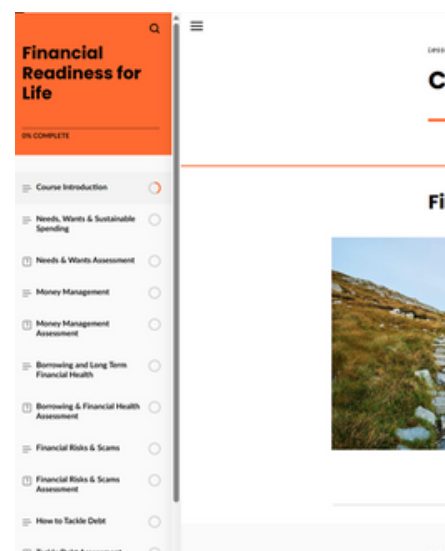
Money Management – Budgeting, savings, and managing day-to-day expenses.

Borrowing & Long-Term Financial Health – The impact of borrowing and comparing credit providers.

Risk & Scams – Identifying financial scams and recognising risks such as gambling and cryptocurrency pitfalls.

Tackling Debt – Strategies for managing and prioritising debt effectively.

The programme came about when the Access and Widening Participation Office at ATU began to **notice an increase in student financial distress** during the 2023/24 academic year. Rising living costs, accommodation shortages, and commuting expenses have left many students struggling to meet basic needs



FINANCIAL READINESS FOR LIFE - FINANCIAL LITERACY COURSE FOR STUDENTS AT ATU IN IRELAND

Recent data from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) shows that **35% of 1st year undergraduates in Ireland consider withdrawing, with financial reasons** being the second highest reason. Moreover, **applications for the Student Assistance Fund** at ATU have risen by **39% over the past year**, underscoring the urgency of growing financial need.

At the Launch, Dr Orla Flynn, President of ATU, said the university is committed to student welfare, stating: **“Financial distress is a significant barrier to student success.** We recognise the increasing financial pressures our students face, from the cost of living to commuting expenses. This initiative provides them with **the tools to build financial resilience and make informed choices about their money.**”

Gwen Harris, Regional Manager of MABS, highlighted the importance of financial education, saying: **“With 43% of adults in Ireland not meeting the minimum OECD level of financial literacy,** it is vital to equip students with these skills early on. This course empowers them to **make informed financial decisions, reducing stress** and improving their overall college experience.”

This digital programme, co-created with student input, is designed to be **mobile-friendly and interactive**, ensuring maximum engagement. As part of the initiative, students will earn a **digital badge upon completion**, enhancing their employability and financial awareness.

As financial hardship continues to impact student success, this pioneering initiative stands as a proactive step towards equipping students with the knowledge and confidence to manage their finances effectively. The Financial Readiness for Life course is not only a resource for ATU students but is **available to the public**, specifically aimed at **young people at third-level education and students preparing to go to third-level education.**

Needs, Wants & Sustainable Spending

Distinguish between spending needs and spending wants. Appreciate what responsible and sustainable spending means for protecting the environment.



Risks & Scams

Identify and protect against common scams and frauds. Be aware of Money Mules & risks relating to Cryptocurrency.



Tackling Debt

If you find yourself in financial difficulty - how to manage & prioritise debt



LETTER FROM ITALY: CHALLENGES FACED BY OVER-INDEBTED PEOPLE IN SPRING 2025 – THE PERSPECTIVE OF JIMMY GRESLIN, LEGGE3

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

The third forum organized by the Liberi dal Debito association was held in 2024. It was hosted by the Lazio Region and attended by the authorities and the main national media, to whom **the National Report on overindebtedness** was presented.

In 2024, Italy continues to show **poor performance in addressing over-indebtedness**, with minimal improvements in court decisions and processing times. It remains **the most hostile country in Europe toward over-indebted individuals**. Courts persist in not facilitating access to debt relief, and many rulings contradict both the legal intent and the Crisis Code.

Now, every year, corrective measures are produced that complicate the procedure rather than facilitating access. The Liberi dal Debito association remains constantly committed to disseminating information and raising awareness among citizens about **the former Law 3 of 2012, now integrated into the Crisis Code of 2020, to ensure that everyone can have a second chance**, as defined in Spain.

In February 2025, an act promoted by Liberi dal Debito was presented to the Senate, which provides **that citizens can choose to be assisted by a manager, without this being compulsorily assigned by an OCC**. This way, the over-indebted person is not forced to undergo the appointment of managers who not only lack knowledge but who, as we have had the opportunity to denounce on several occasions, are often unfamiliar with the subject.



LETTER FROM ITALY: CHALLENGES FACED BY OVER-INDEBTED PEOPLE IN SPRING 2025 – THE PERSPECTIVE OF JIMMY GRESLIN, LEGGE3

Managers who, after years, are not able to produce the detailed reports necessary for filing the appeal in court. Managers who, due to their slowness, ask the over-indebted person five times to produce the necessary documents, making them inevitably unusable as they are expired or too dated.

Unfortunately, the terrain on which Liberi dal Debito has decided to operate is undermined by a mentality that, **in Italy, sees the over-indebted as fraudsters or tax evaders**, without having the knowledge that only serious operators in the sector can have about how and for what real causes debts can arise. A very high percentage of Italians find themselves over-indebted because of **scams that the state cannot or does not want to remedy**.

A suffocating **bureaucracy** that demands signatures and privacy releases even to collect a postcard, and allows, despite the register of oppositions, anyone who has access to private telephone numbers to often carry out telephone scams to the detriment of less-prepared citizens, cannot but be considered guilty and complicit in many cases of over-indebtedness that are not only often not recognized but, even more often, opposed.

Liberi dal Debito's commitment, in addition to spreading knowledge of the tools offered by law for debt resolution, is aimed at promoting, in **collaboration with local administrations**, the opening of counters to offer **free advice to citizens who request it, including through municipal offices**.

At the same time, the continuous search for agreements for the organization of meetings aimed at promoting the subject of financial education starting from school environments, in addition to the renewal of the agreement with the **National Anti-Suicide Observatory** to offer those who live in particularly serious situations, **free psychological support by professional psychologists** who have dedicated themselves to the phenomenon that is reaching worrying figures.

Jimmy Greselin
Legge3 & Liberi dal Debito

FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: ADICAE'S COMMITMENT TO FINANCIAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN SPAIN IN 2024

In the March Newsletter, we presented one of the leading ADICAE programs, "Consumers and the New Legislative Developments in E-commerce"; now it's time to say a few words about other programs that were developed in 2024 in Spain by ADICAE.

"Consumer Rights in the Current Mortgage Market. Neobanks and Hipotech"

ADICAE has analyzed the online mortgage market, the performance of Hipotech intermediaries (comparators), and the results of the 2023 government measures. It has also developed information guides.

The studies and publications are available to the public on the ADICAE website: <https://observatoriohipotecario.adicae.net/>

Apart from that, in 2024, ADICAE completed two projects that they began in 2023 in collaboration with **Better Finance**.

a) **Invest for Better Climate**- dedicated to raising **awareness about investments that support the environment** and the creation of 10 working and training groups.

b) **Activate Your Money**- dedicated to the adaptation to Spain of the book of the same title, aimed at training and **empowering women in managing their savings and investments**, with special attention also to Sustainable investment.



PENNO3.0 - FREE FINANCIAL COACH FROM FINLAND

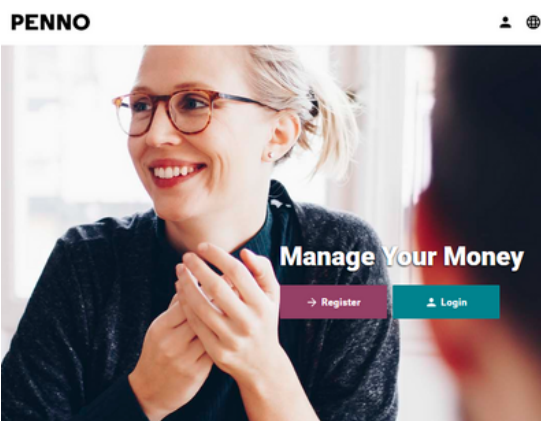
The Guarantee Foundation published the **Penno.fi web application** in April 2016. The purpose was to provide an **easy-to-use digital tool for planning and monitoring one's financial spending**. The concrete goal was that Penno would help create a clear overall picture of one's monthly spending and personal budget constraints and would also motivate people to start saving or prepare for changes. Over the years, more than **72,000 people** have logged in to Penno. According to user feedback, Penno has had a positive impact on monitoring and understanding expenses, as well as strengthening the sense of carelessness and confidence.

At the beginning of this year, **new features** were added to Penno. **The savings feature** was updated to better meet the needs of users, and a **new budgeting feature** was added to the service. Personalizing Penno was made easier, as users can now create personal categories, make use of graphs, and tag each expense as indispensable, necessary, or unnecessary. All changes were made according to the wishes and needs of users, and surveys and interviews were conducted to ensure a smooth user experience.

Penno is also available in English and can be found [here](#).

For further inquiries, please contact:

aura.pylkkanen@takuusaatio.fi.



PENNO USER TESTIMONIES

"Budgeting is made much easier with Penno when you see how much money you have available for the rest of the month."

Do you use Penno? Tell us your story.

PENNO USER TESTIMONIES

"A good application for a retired person with a low income who has so far neglected to keep track of income, let alone expenses."

Do you use Penno? Tell us your story.



Free

Penno is a simpler way to manage your money. Start using Penno today.



Easy

Enter your income and expenses. Penno will show your money situation at a glance.



Inspiring

Realize your goals. Penno can help you prepare for the future and save for your dreams.

OVERVIEW OF EVENTS FOR DEBT ADVISORS/DEBT COUNSELLORS IN EUROPE



20th IFF Conference on Financial Services – 5/6 June 2025, Hamburg

The Institut für Finanzdienstleistungen e.V. (iff) will celebrate 20 years of the Conference on Financial Services in 2025. Under the theme "**Building Bridges in Financial Consumer Protection – Will Cooperation Succeed at Eye Level?**"

Attendees can expect a wide range of sessions – from discussions on regulatory challenges to practical insights from financial education projects and even a debate on early mortgage repayment penalties. One of the highlights is BAG-SB's presentation on the current state of debt counselling services in Germany, shedding light on access and innovation in this key area. A glance at the programme shows that attendees can expect inspiring sessions on digitalisation, green finance, financial literacy, and fininfluencer development.

More information: [//www.iff-hamburg.de/hamburg-2025/](https://www.iff-hamburg.de/hamburg-2025/)



We would like to encourage you to share your new materials, educational resource publications, best practices (case studies, reports, and research), tools, templates, and success stories with us in our next edition. We are a growing community and sharing our work helps us all learn and grown stronger as a consumer debt network. You can email your contributions to secretary@ecd n.eu with a brief description of the materials. Thank you for your dedication and support.