



Social Services Europe

SSE CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE EPSR

[Social Services Europe](#) (SSE) represents a sector with over 200,000, primarily not-for-profit organisations, employing over 11 million people. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the European Commission consultation on the Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The European Commission will not be able to deliver on the [Pillar of Social Rights](#) without the close involvement of social service providers which give daily support to many of the people targeted by the Pillar such as persons with disabilities, older people, children, people in poverty, homeless people, migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities, among others. With the support of the European Commission, SSE will be able to work with thousands of social service providers to deliver well-funded, high quality, accessible and affordable social services and ensure the Action Plan will deliver genuine impact.

The Action Plan should set out a legal, financial and coherent policy framework for social services which:

- **Secures the EU's financing and investment opportunities for the sector.** Social services are the best placed to deliver on the 20 Principles of the Pillar, but at the same time are facing a threat regarding their financial sustainability, especially given the ongoing crisis. Service providers require urgent, adequate and sustainable financial support from European-shared management funds, such as the European Structural and Investment Funds, as well as the Recovery and Resilience Facility and InvestEU. With the support of the European Commission, SSE can facilitate closer links between Managing Authorities (ESF+ and ERDF) and social service providers, and promote investment opportunities in social services with the EIB and other important institutional investors. SSE, through its members, identifies pressing social needs and is currently addressing an increasing demand for social services, due to the impact of the Corona pandemic, which must also be taken into consideration by the Action Plan. Through a dedicated Support Centre, SSE (and other social services organisations at EU level) would be well-placed to bridge the gap between the social services sector and EU funds, as well as to help create simplification and facilitation procedures to boost access to EU funds for social services; thus helping to implement EU policies.
- **Boosts the quality of social services,** needed in order to deliver on the 20 Principles of the Pillar. A continuous pursuit of innovation and inclusiveness, based on a human-rights and person-centred approach, is necessary in service delivery. The sector should be supported to ensure that the green and digital transition promoted by the European Commission is also fair, just and social. With the support of the European Commission, SSE can help to reactivate and improve the EU voluntary quality framework for social services, and use it as a tool to steer the allocation of EU financial support.
- **Improves the attractiveness of the sector through better working conditions, recognition and quality training.** The social services sector is a growing sector. Improving the scope of the welfare system, ageing, migration, growing inequalities, digitalisation, the development of “new vulnerable groups” due to the pandemic, and evolving family patterns that result in increased care demands, will substantially increase the need for social services in the foreseeable future. However, the social services sector is struggling to retain staff and recruit new qualified personnel. SSE can help to ensure that social service providers are involved in and benefit from the EU's Skills Agenda and other labour market policies.

There are many different sectors of social services (e.g. disability services, care homes for older people), different approaches to social support (e.g. faith-based and secular services) and different types of provider (NGO/Social Economy, public, private). SSE tries to bring this diversity of social services together under one roof, and with the support of the Commission can evolve into a truly representative European body of social service providers.

With the objectives of the EPSR in mind, SSE wants to collaborate with the European Commission (its different DGs and Agencies) and its Member States and local and managing authorities to ensure that EU actions and financial support mechanisms not only contribute to the implementation of the Pillar's Action Plan but that this also reaches social services in a dynamic and effective way toward fostering social inclusion and equality across the EU.

The coronavirus crisis offers a must-seize opportunity for a paradigm shift towards an economy of wellbeing that puts people first and values the relevance of the social services sector for a functioning society and economy. With improved investment opportunities, financial support, and recognition of the sector, Social Services Europe seeks to support the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights across the European Union at national, regional and local levels.