

# Introduction of a Social Convergence Framework in the European Semester – Key Messages from the EMCO and the SPC

## First reaction by Social Services Europe (31 May 2023)

1) General statement/assessment: **SSE expresses its support for the introduction of a Social Convergence Framework in the European Semester as it aims to strengthen the social dimension of the EU Semester and support upward social convergence.**

2) Additional positive points

- SSE considers **useful that the upward social convergence analysis can be a basis for Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs).**
- SSE also sees positive that Council Conclusions on Social Convergence in the European Union would be adopted by the EPSCO Council every year in June.
- The Key Messages state that the identification of challenges on social convergence for certain MS should neither automatically nor directly lead to proposals for Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs). **The EC still could issue CSRs based on the challenges in the new social convergence reports. For SSE it is positive that the new social convergence reports would inevitably lead to more social CSRs** (even if there is no “automatism”).

3) Additional reflections and proposals by SSE for adaptations/improvement to make the Social Convergence Framework work to its full extent – knowing that the key messages reflect a compromise and that a different wording might have meant that certain paragraphs or sentences would have needed to be taken out

- Whereas the analysis conducted in the Commission Services’ new ‘Social Convergence Reports’ would be based on wide quantitative and qualitative evidence, there is **no reference made yet in the Key Messages regarding the involvement/consultation/participation of civil society organisations in gathering that evidence.** For SSE, such a participatory element, however, would need to be introduced for the Commission Services to obtain additional evidence from the ground and CSO-based policy reform proposals.
- For SSE, the **non-binding nature of analyses presented or of conclusions based on the Social Convergence Framework** would reduce its (potential) impact.
- SSE sees the risk that without political commitment and a participatory approach the introduction of the Social Convergence Framework and related analyses could add another layer of a more bureaucratic exercise without bringing about real changes towards upwards social convergence in the EU MS.