



## Towards the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights – the Role of Social Services

Social Services Europe is the largest European umbrella organisation representing non-profit social and health care providers. Our members are at the forefront of ensuring accessible, affordable and quality services for all people in Europe and believe that investing in people brings both social and economic returns. Social and health care services enable people to live with dignity and care but also support people to engage in economic activities that contribute to growth.

## Executive summary

*"[The European Pillar of Social Rights] is not a poem, it is a programme: a programme of principles first, a programme of action next."<sup>1</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker (2017)*

The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) represented a decisive step towards reinforced upward convergence between Member States by putting fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems at the heart of a more Social Europe. Putting social services at the centre of its implementation stage is needed to fulfil such a promise.

Implementing the Pillar in a holistic manner, in line with a person-centred approach to service needs, will make the most of the synergies and complementarities that can be established between different types of interventions and principles enshrined in it. To this aim, implementation should be based on the provision of quality services supported by adequate funding and underpinned by innovative design and implementation that maximize the positive transformative power of social interventions.

This calls upon enabling legal and financial framework where adequate resources match the needs and ambition within the Pillar, making more relevant than ever the demand for enhanced social investment. This will ensure the right volumes and quality of resources needed to secure sustainable provision of quality services ahead of structural societal challenges such as ageing or evolving family patterns which result in increased care demands that require, in particular, the recruitment and retention of quality staff that fulfils the sector's proven potential to create jobs.

The ambition within the Pillar must be underpinned by a coherent policy framework. For this reason, the EU should use its full political leverage to support progress on the principles of the Pillar without limiting itself to legislative measures in the policy areas –and principles– where this is possible. Together with funding –already mentioned–, a lot can be achieved using hard as well as soft law instruments such as the Open Method of Coordination, policy monitoring and evaluation, as well as programmes and practices.

Since the launch of a proposal for a EPSR, Social Services Europe (SSE) has been committed to informing and engaging its member organizations at national and local levels, identifying the unique opportunity represented by the Pillar to make Europe more social.

SSE commits to continue its active engagement towards a successful implementation of the Pillar that brings positive change to people's lives. Based on their experience in the provision of social services according to the principles within the Pillar, SSE members are in a unique position to work, together with European, national and local authorities, as active ambassadors of stronger social rights and higher social standards in the EU.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/president-juncker-social-summit-fair-jobs-and-growth-2017-nov-17\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/president-juncker-social-summit-fair-jobs-and-growth-2017-nov-17_en)

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**Social Services Europe** brings together eight Europe-wide networks of not-for-profit providers of social and health care services who each have a track record in providing value-driven services for the most vulnerable in our societies. The network aims to strengthen the profile and position of social services and promote the role of not-for-profit social service providers in Europe.

## Introduction

Social Services Europe (SSE) is the network of the largest European umbrella organisations representing not-for-profit providers of social and health care services. SSE members -Caritas Europa, CEDAG, EASPD, EPR, Eurodiaconia, FEANTSA, SOLIDAR and the Red Cross EU Office- together represent more than 100.000 providers of services at the forefront of ensuring accessible, affordable and quality services for all people in Europe and promoting social inclusion and social cohesion. The social service sector currently employs about 10,2% of the EU workforce and is the sector which saw the largest rise in employment in recent years, with over 2,6 million new jobs created between 2009-2017<sup>2</sup>. It provides support to some of the most vulnerable individuals in our societies, making it an important player in the context of employment and social protection policies.

The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) represents a solid basis for a more social Europe and a driver towards upward social convergence. In our view, the EPSR has the potential to improve social protection systems across Europe and, if its 20 principles are observed at European level and in Member States, the Pillar will improve the wellbeing of people and of vulnerable groups in particular. We want the EPSR to be a success and we are, therefore, keen to contribute to its implementation in order to boost a more social Europe and help restore trust in the EU as a citizens' project.

Through its direct connection with 100.000s of social and health services, including some of the biggest social service providers in Europe with potential to lead this process, SSE is in a privileged position to bring the Pillar to life at grassroots level and, therefore, commits to act as a driving force in its implementation. To illustrate this experience, this paper includes concrete examples of service provision that fulfil the principles as defined by the Pillar and could be used as models to make the Pillar thrive.

Furthermore, we would like to draw your attention to a number of messages and share some proposals to ensure that the EPSR is firmly established thanks to a stronger link between principles and practice on the ground that leverages, as a result, on social service providers' potential to act as ambassadors of the EPSR.

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<sup>2</sup> The figures refer to workers employed in the 'health and social work' sector; European Commission, [European Semester Thematic Factsheet. Health Systems](#), 2017.

## Key Messages

- The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights on 17 November 2017 represented a decisive step towards reinforced upward convergence between Member States by putting fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems at the heart of a more Social Europe. Social services are crucial to ensure the implementation of the principles included in the EPSR at national, regional and local levels (see Table 1). In light of this, social service providers should be acknowledged as key implementation partners and SSE would like to engage into a dialogue with policy-makers at different governments levels, bringing in their knowledge to the shared goal of operationalizing the Pillar in the most effective manner.

**Table 1. Social services and the European Pillar of Social Rights**

<p>Quality social services are fundamental to ensure the implementation of at least 10 principles within the EPSR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Principle 01 – Social services assist in the achievement of <b>inclusive education, training and life-long learning</b> by supporting all people to have access to such opportunities.</li> <li>▪ Principle 02 – Social services support <b>gender equality</b> by providing care and support to enable parents or family members, often women, the choice to work if they wish to.</li> <li>▪ Principle 03 – Social services support <b>equal opportunities</b> by helping all people to access employment, social protection, education and access to goods and services.</li> <li>▪ Principle 04 – Social services assist in <b>active support to employment</b> by providing personalised, continuous and consistent support to help disadvantaged persons onto the labour market.</li> <li>▪ Principle 09 – Social services support <b>work-life balance</b> by providing care services to those who need it.</li> <li>▪ Principle 11 – Social services provide <b>childcare and support to children</b> by providing childcare services to those who need it, as well as additional support for disadvantaged children and/or families.</li> <li>▪ Principle 17 – Social services support the <b>inclusion of people with disabilities</b> by providing services that enable people with disabilities to participate in society and in the labour market.</li> <li>▪ Principle 18 – Social services support the provision of <b>long-term care</b> by providing quality, community-based long-term care service.</li> <li>▪ Principle 19 – Social services assist the provision of <b>housing and assistance for the homeless</b> by providing support services for homeless people.</li> <li>▪ Principle 20 – Social services help to increase <b>access to essential services</b> by helping disadvantaged people access such services.</li> </ul>
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### Building upon existing good practice

- The EPSR gathers principles and rights that are essential to prepare the EU for present and future challenges. In some cases, the Pillar reaffirms some of the rights that are already present in the Union acquis and at Member State level. Accordingly, in many cases the provision of social services already matches the requirements implied by the principles defined in the EPSR. For this reason, we call upon national authorities to build upon the existing practices that operate already under the principles as the best way to ensure a swift implementation of the EPSR.

- However, this is not contradictory with the promotion and support to innovation in the delivery of social services. Innovation is in fact key to ensure that services continue to respond to arising social needs and the associated demands of service users. Promoting innovation in service provision is, therefore, key to guarantee the continued relevance of the principles enshrined in the EPSR.

#### **Enabling integration across principles**

- The implementation of the different principles enshrined in the EPSR should avoid at all cost a silo approach to service provision. Looking at the EPSR as a whole, instead of principle by principle, will make the most of the synergies and complementarities that can be established between different types of interventions, avoid overlaps and render services more effective for users, whose needs are often more complex than service boundaries are.

#### **Emphasising quality of social services**

- The effectiveness of the principles described in the Pillar is conditional to the provision of quality services supported by adequate funding and underpinned by innovative design and implementation that maximize the positive transformative power of social interventions.
- The emphasis on quality should be supported by taking into account the European Voluntary Quality Framework for Social Services, which has constituted a positive reference point to steer progress in quality of services across the EU. Drawing on this positive experience, the implementation of the principles in the EPSR should integrate the orientation given to services by the Framework and any future revision of the Framework should take into account the EPSR principles.

#### **A social investment paradigm is key**

- The services needed to deliver on the principles of the EPSR require an enabling legal and financial framework where adequate resources match the needs and ambition within the Pillar. Notwithstanding modest economic recovery, the EU has not given itself yet a favourable fiscal space that breaks down the circle of austerity and increased social needs. This is, in our view, a key precondition for a successful implementation of the EPSR.
- To this aim, the inclusion of adequacy and financial sustainability as shared objectives in several of the principles in the EPSR raises the issue of how the tension between these two dimensions can be handled and, more importantly, what the stance of policy-makers in this will be. Attempts to make the delivery of social and healthcare services financially sustainable often means making them more cost-effective, which can negatively affect service accessibility, affordability and/or quality. However, reality proves that high quality health and social services leads to more sustainable financial outcomes in the long run. A clarification of how economic policies at both EU and national levels should deal with such tensions ensuring that quality and access in individual principles is not undermined will be key.

- In this regard, the commitment of the EU and Member States towards the implementation of the EPSR makes more relevant than ever the call for enhanced social investment. Public funding should, in this way, invest in social services in a holistic manner, ensuring the right volumes and quality of resources to ensure, in particular, a sustainable provision and investment in quality in service delivery. Notwithstanding the primacy of public funding, public authorities should also develop the right complementarities between public and private funding, for instance through EU Financial Instruments which are key to boost the long-term investments needed to address the social infrastructure gap in the EU<sup>3</sup>. Mainstreamed social impact considerations should guide investment decisions.

### Principle 11 – Childcare and support to children

#### "Maisons relais pour enfants" – Caritas Luxembourg

Since 2005, Caritas Luxembourg has been implementing a project that aims at combating the lack of quality early childcare and support young parents to increase their working hours. These services provide quality child care for all children aged from 1 to 12 years, offering parents the possibility of having a more affordable childcare service, according to their income.

After a pilot project run by Caritas in two municipalities, all municipalities built their *maison relais* and either manage them themselves or have contracted an NGO (like Caritas or others) to run it.

The service provides non-formal education, supporting the integration of children at the level of the local community in Luxembourg society and promoting the inclusion in Luxembourg's basic education. The number of children in early childcare facilities has grown from 2,795 in 2005 to 53,110 in 2016.

Since 2017, the quality of the service increased with additional measures: a free 20-hour service for 46 weeks a year and multilingual early education in French and Luxembourgish, considering also the children's mother tongue.

This project not only supports children's inclusion in basic education, but also facilitates families' lives by providing affordable quality childcare.

More information about the project is available [here](#).

### Principle 1 – Education, training and life-long learning

#### Literacy@work (SOLIDAR)

To address effective lifelong learning as well as the participation of adults in education and training the EU helped to fund the project Literacy@Work. The main goal of this project was to develop and improve both the quality of workplace literacy training in Europe for entry-level employees and the business performance of companies.

An estimated 20% of European adults lack the literacy skills they need to function fully in modern society. Companies have discovered this phenomenon quite recently as a result of economic changes (quality procedures which impact on the whole production chain including low-skilled workers), the use of ITC, etc. Consultants often use their standard diagnosis tools which are adapted to highly qualified employees and linked to general education systems. However, such tools do not enable them to provide a personalised training path adapted to low-skilled employees and do not offer concrete solutions for direct application in the workplace.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission-ELTI, [Boosting Investment in Social Infrastructure in Europe. Report of the High-Level Task Force on Investing in Social Infrastructure in Europe](#), Discussion Paper 074, January 2018.

*Main goals of the project:*

- to make use of and disseminate to continuous training providers in companies a best-practice methodological approach to build a literacy training path at work
- to raise the awareness of companies regarding the value of literacy skills for productivity, employees' wellbeing and reducing staff turnover
- detecting and identifying literacy problems in the staff

During the course of the project awareness was raised by means of information / training sessions for companies' human resources and/or training departments.

The *Literacy@work* project was implemented by a transnational partnership consisting of ALPES (France), BFI OÖ (Austria), CDI (France), and Zukunftsbau (Germany).

More information can be found [here](#).

### **Investing in staff and job creation**

- As a labour-intensive sector, ensuring the right levels and quality of staff is core to the provision of quality social services. The sector already employs over 10 million people and is one of Europe's biggest job creators with over 2,6 million new jobs created between 2009-2017. These figures reveal the structural demand for professionals in a sector which, even in times of crisis, should respond to fundamental societal challenges such as demographic changes (ageing population) and evolving family patterns (ensuring work-life balance). The implementation of the EPSR is an opportunity to create new jobs in the social services sector. However, to avoid added challenges to recruit and retain sufficient staff in a context of already high demand of social services, we call upon pro-active public policies to improve the attractiveness of the sector, in order to unlock its important job creation potential, as well as to retain quality staff<sup>4</sup>. Improving the level of salaries and work conditions, and investing in skilling and training activities in the sector is essential to attract the staff that are able to deliver quality services.

### **Principle 8 – Social dialogue and involvement of workers**

#### **Promoting Employers in Social Services In Social dialogue (PESSIS) 1, 2, 3 and + (EASPD, EPR, SOLIDAR and others)**

Social services employ over 10 million staff in Europe and have created close to 2 million new jobs since 2008. In many European Member States, social services employers' engage with workers representations in the form of social dialogue in view of negotiating collective agreements (or other forms of agreements) to create decent jobs, improve working conditions and career paths for workers, as well as increasing the quality of the care and support services they provide.

The PESSIS projects provided Country Reports on the state of play of such social dialogue structures in 22 EU Member States (soon to be 28 via PESSIS+). These Country Reports showed a diversity in how such structures were set-up with:

- well established social dialogue structures
- existing employer/employee agreements
- newly established social dialogue structures

<sup>4</sup> [Social Services Europe, Recruitment and Retention in Social Services – Unlocking the Sector's Job Creation Potential](#), 2017.

-recently reformed social dialogue structures

The Country Reports also highlighted the similar challenges affecting the sector's workforce throughout Europe: ageing, gender inequalities, below average pay, part-time jobs, difficulties in attracting and retaining staff, etc.

Yet the Reports also demonstrated the usefulness of social dialogue in finding joint solutions between employers and workers on many of the aforementioned issues. In most, if not all, EU Member States, social services employers are organising themselves in view of further engaging with workers; often through social dialogue structures. The PESSIS projects are supporting this process and, facilitated by Social Services Europe, the national employers are also organising themselves at European level through the Federation of European Social Employers.

More information about the project is available [here](#).

### **Buying services in a more social way**

- Some of the tools that can enable the full social dimension of the EPSR are in fact already available. For instance, the social provisions made available by the Directive 24/2014 on Public Procurement represent an excellent opportunity to give social economy and not-for-profit operators, such as the members of SSE, a prominent role in the delivery of the principles enshrined in the EPSR. As new public procurement rules are being implemented at member state level, SSE calls upon contracting authorities to integrate the principles of EPSR in their contracting procedures and shape specifications accordingly. To achieve this, they should engage social service providers more effectively in such processes, making use of reserved contracts, social considerations or negotiated procedures as the best way to leverage on social operators' experience to deliver on the principles of the EPSR with a social aim. The European Commission's present efforts to ensure a higher uptake of social criteria in public procurement should do this in line with the principles outlined in the EPSR and make this link more explicit<sup>5</sup>.

### ***Principle 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities***

#### **AFID Diferença Foundation (EPR)**

AFID Diferença Foundation (Portugal), member of the European Platform for Rehabilitation, promotes the autonomy and social support of people with disabilities, including health, education and training. In line with the roots of the foundation, they also fight exclusion and are committed to and guarantee excellence in their service provision. The Transition to Active Life programme was started by the Resource Centre for Inclusion in Foundation AFID in 2013. The overall goal of the Resource Centre for Inclusion (CRI) is to meet the special educational needs of students with significant limitations in terms of activity and participation in one or more areas of life.

CRI's services are taken to schools, where students receive individual support allowing specific skills to be acquired. Activities vary from speech and occupational therapy to work on interpersonal relations and community participation. The programme also provides teachers with strategies to improve learning and raises awareness about special needs.

The fact that this is a comprehensive methodology and service provided in schools allows early diagnosis

<sup>5</sup> [Social Services Europe answers to the Public Consultation on the scope and structure of a European Commission Guide on Socially Responsible Public Procurement](#), February 2018.

and intervention. It prepares them for the transition to vocational training, the job market, further study and life after school. CRI provides its services in various groupings of schools in the Lisbon area and covers an average of 186 students a year.

#### ***Principle 4 – Active support to employment***

##### **WERTRAUM Social Enterprise for product designs with added-value (Eurodiaconia)**

The not-for-profit organization and social enterprise Die Wille gGmbH aims to support people on their way to employment. To this end they offer counselling, coaching, qualifications and specific program delivery. Their vision is an inclusive labour market with equal access to training, for all.

The labour and municipal departments, responsible for the support and integration of the long-term unemployed in Germany, have delegated social enterprises with supporting the integration of this group into the labour market.

In the upcycling workshop, the long-term unemployed will be employed and trained, by turning used and waste material into new designs with added value. This certified social enterprise combines entrepreneurship with social engagement and sustainability. The production and sale of upcycled (or re-used) products should create revenue that will enable lasting and sustainable employment offers. This way the social enterprise encourages societal participation and labour market integration.

The workshop team is comprised of people with lower chances of integration. So far, they have found no job, have a disability, have no vocational training or educational certificate, might have a criminal record or speak German poorly. All employees of the upcycling workshop receive needs-based coaching and their individual abilities are further (re)trained. Their work and capabilities are put to best use in the workshop. They have the meaningful task of producing new and innovative products. The knowledge that their work is valued gives them new motivation and income, increasing their chances of reintegration into the mainstream labour market.

Through WERTRAUM and the responsible use of waste materials, Die Wille gGmbH creates a socially sustainable product.

More information about the project is available [here](#).

#### **EU funds to support the implementation of the EPSR**

- As the EU is currently embarking in the definition on its post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, it is essential to guarantee that EU funds continue to support social inclusion and cohesion in our societies. In particular, EU funds must ensure that they are well equipped to steer the more immediate social agenda of the EU and facilitate the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, pointing at best practices, enabling these to be scaled up and supporting member states in translating the principles enshrined in it into effective strategies towards fairer and more inclusive societies.
- The partnership principle promotes the closer cooperation between public authorities at national, regional and local levels, economic and social partners and civil society organisations in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the spending of the EU Structural and Investment Funds. It is the best way to give voice to relevant stakeholders and, in particular, service providers towards the common goal of a seamless coordination in fund management that takes into account the implementation of the EPSR and should therefore be strengthened at all stages of the programme cycle. When approving and

evaluating the Operational Programmes, the European Commission should review the quality of the implementation of the partnership principle in each Member State.

**Principle 4 – Active support to employment**

**'PULSA empleo' Initiative (Red Cross EU Office)**

Since 2016, the Spanish Red Cross implements the *PULSA empleo* (employment) initiative, which aims to help young people to get into their first job.

The project is funded by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the European Social Fund (ESF). It is implemented in partnership with local and regional employers and targets young people from 18 to 29 years old.

*PULSA empleo* provides active support to employment through counselling and job matching. End users are involved in collaborative activities such as social, labour and skills diagnosis, professional guidance and intermediation with companies.

Particular attention is paid to young people facing poverty, racial discrimination, social exclusion, or disability.

**Tying the EPSR to the European Semester**

- The 2018 Annual Growth Survey made a very powerful call for social protection systems that ensured equal access to quality services. The European Semester process should leverage upon such an unequivocal message and promote the implementation of the EPSR as a priority channel to ensure affordable, accessible and quality social services.

**Principle 19 – Housing and assistance for the homeless**

**Focus Ireland (FEANTSA)**

Focus Ireland is one of the Republic of Ireland's leading homeless and housing NGOs, providing a range of services to people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. As part of a range of services for young people, Focus Ireland provides a Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) service in Waterford, a housing led service linked closely to the core principles of HF4Y in Limerick and have recently commenced a HF4Y service in Dublin.

Focus Ireland provides aftercare services for young care leavers through short term residential programs and a support service in Waterford following successful models in Dublin. However, Focus Ireland noticed a large gap in services for young people in Waterford, and noted that many young people with complex needs who did not qualify for aftercare services or who had left an aftercare service were at particular risk of becoming homeless.

These young people have generally had negative experiences of mainstream social services and can be difficult to engage with. The lack of opportunity afforded to them to gain a period of stability, what means that they struggle to develop positive aspects to their lives such as education, employment or a sense of community. This can result in drug dependency, involvement in criminal behaviour or mental health difficulties. For these vulnerable youth, traditional homeless services were not wielding positive results.

A HF4Y project allows us to provide that stability and, through its principles, build trusting relationships with hard to reach young people.

Since its commencement in 2016 the service has worked with 23 young people some of whom are young

people with young children. 21 of these young people have remained out of homelessness and in accommodation. The H4FY project fills the gap in services for these young people.

The service in Waterford uses a rolling Housing model, which is based on their needs at the time the young person presents to the service. This means that all programs have the option to be delivered without physically moving to a new house, so that a transitional program may become long term housing. In some instances, the housing situation may change and the young people may be required to move home. In this instance, support will follow the young person and if another long-term tenancy cannot be attained, then a short-term will be sought in the meantime.

The service provider, Focus Ireland, is an approved Housing Body sanctioned by the local municipality. This allows the organisation to purchase property specifically for vulnerable youth. As the owner of the properties the service provider also has the flexibility to move tenancies between their stock as needed by the young people.

- More generally, it is crucial to ensure a long-term coherence between the guidance and recommendations provided in the European Semester process and the principles enshrined in the EPSR. Conversely, it is essential to link social services in the EPSR with concrete policy guidance instruments in order to maximise the chances of its effective implementation. In our view, this is the most credible guarantee to cement the commitment of European policy coordination towards the EPSR as the compass of social dimension of the EU.
- To this aim, we call upon the necessary tools to guarantee such coherence. In this regard, we call for a European Semester social scoreboard which is consistently aligned with the principles in the EPSR and covers all of them. In our view, such a holistic approach is the most credible way to anchor the commitment to progress in every principle in the EPSR and avoid the risk that some principles are given priority over others, which is contrary to the rights-based nature of the Pillar.

#### **Implementation also needs a political drive**

- In addition to the key role of economic guidance, SSE believes that the EU should use its full political leverage to support progress on the principles of the Pillar without limiting itself to legislative measures in the policy areas –and principles– where this is possible. Together with funding –already mentioned–, a lot can be achieved using hard as well as soft law instruments such as the Open Method of Coordination, policy monitoring and evaluation, as well as programmes and practices.
- The Initiative to support Work-Life Balance under the form of an EU Directive, presented as part of the EPSR, brought to the fore the need to promote more and better care services. It acknowledges the positive effects of this on the creation of more possibilities for both women and men to enter or stay in employment, addressing wage, career and care inequalities, boosting the health and wellbeing status of informal carers and creating jobs in the social sector itself. In light of this, SSE supports the adoption and implementation of the proposal by EU Member States.

**Principle 18 – Long-term Care**

**Project „Together in Steinheim“ (Eurodiaconia)**

Steinheim is a little town of 13.000 inhabitants in a rural area in Westphalia (central Germany). Once a center of furniture industries, a 12% rise of the population over 60 and a 26% increase of children, together with a 3% reduction of the workforce, has been forecast until 2020. Acknowledging this, the municipality partnered with the regional diaconal social service provider Evangelisches Johannswerk and created a foundation for community-based services.

The project “Together in Steinheim” consists of three elements:

-Living: A condominium of 28 barrier free apartments of different sizes for elderly couples and single persons. The newly erected building, the [Helene-Schweitzer-Zentrum](#), has no corridors but is centered around a big living-kitchen area and follows a special concept of lighting. Next to it are a nursing home with 48 places, specialized in dementia and palliative care and the health center of the municipality of Steinheim. The city center is ten minutes away and the station at three-minute walking distance. The Helene-Schweitzer-Zentrum and the health center employ more than 100 employees.

-Consultation: Part of the consulting concept are preventive home visits involving around 50 volunteers who visit the very old and inform them about support and care facilities in Steinheim and the region. Workshops on dementia for caring relatives and other interested citizens have been organized.

-Neighborhood center in the middle of the Helene-Schweitzer-Zentrum: Around 40 events have been organized so far by the citizens of Steinheim themselves. They formed interest groups on subjects like the organization of a Christmas party and a Christmas market, gardening with refugees, graffiti actions, the campaign “move for dementia” or Yoga workshops.

More information about the project can be found [here](#).

- Bringing forward the set of non-legislative measures included in the Initiative to promote social services will be key to make the commitment towards better work-life balance credible. Therefore, we encourage the European Commission to continue guidance to Member States on employment-friendly and accessible care services, develop the provision of accessible, affordable and quality care services with the support of EU funds –with specific attention to cases of insufficient funding earmarked to such a goal-, promote the use of EFSI and other EU financial instruments to finance social infrastructure and develop EU benchmarks through an improved collection of EU level data on the availability, affordability and quality of formal care services. Other areas of implementation should be the combat against poverty through the setting of EU wide minimum standards, for example on minimum income schemes or on services for the homeless.

**Principle 12 – Social Protection**

**"Union des entreprises à profit social"– CEDAG**

UNIPSO is the Belgian cross-sectoral confederation representing non-profit social profit employers in the Belgian French-speaking Community.

It advocates for an universalist approach of social protection, where services are provided irrespective of the financial capacity of the beneficiaries, but rather basing on their needs. This approach can be summarized as the “4 A’s” approach: availability, accessibility; affordability and adequacy.

In order to avoid incentives leading to discriminations in access to social services, copayments are restricted in amount or in share. In addition, health protection is organized according to a collective insurance system, which guarantees a quasi-full coverage at a cost well below that of privately-financed schemes.

More information about the project is available [here](#).

- Beyond the boost that social providers and partners can give to the implementation of the EPSR through their action on the ground, their efforts must be underpinned by a long-term political commitment. In this regard, the role that the EU can have is far from finished. SSE, therefore, calls for integrating the EPSR into the strategic framework of the European Union after 2020 in order to give the Pillar its full political weight. An immediate opportunity to make such a commitment explicit is the forthcoming EC Commission's Reflection Paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030", which was announced in the Commission's 2018 Work Programme and will be adopted later this year.

#### **Keeping civil society on board**

- Since the launch of a proposal for a EPSR, SSE has been committed to informing and engaging its member organizations at national and local levels. In this way, social service providers have had a key role in creating a positive expectation of the EPSR's potential to make Europe more social. At the crucial stage of implementation, SSE believes that it is essential to ensure enhanced accountability and stronger involvement of civil society organizations to guarantee the success of the EPSR. Therefore, civil society organizations at European, national and local levels should be entitled to structured participation channels to steer and monitor the implementation of the EPSR based on their expertise on the ground and direct engagement with users -the rightsholders themselves-. Indeed, SSE envisions such a participation as the best way to continue social services providers' active engagement in the implementation of the EPSR and fulfil its commitment towards this key instrument for stronger social rights and higher social standards in the EU.