



Social Services Europe's recommendations to meet the needs for Recruitment & Retention in Social Services

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Social Services are one of the biggest job creators in Europe today with over 1.7 million new jobs created since 2008, and it plays a key role in empowering all people to play an active role in society. The sector already employs over 10 million people and is fast growing to respond to demographic changes (ageing population) and evolving family patterns (ensuring work-life balance). As the demand for services is growing, it becomes increasingly challenging to recruit and retain sufficient staff. We see this as an opportunity to create new jobs in the social services sector, which would contribute to both social and economic growth. However, in order to unlock the sector's job creation potential, it is vital to end the downward pressure of public expenditure towards social service providers, which has a negative impact on the quality of the jobs created and the attractiveness of the sector. Instead, we need investment in the sector, and implementation of policy initiatives such as the European Pillar of Social Rights, in order to ensure both quality jobs and quality services. A shortage of staff in social services will ultimately hinder access to quality care and support for those in need of such services (children, persons with disabilities, elderly, and other disadvantaged groups); Consequently, a failure to find adequate solutions to this Europe-wide challenge risks undermining quality of life, social cohesion and inclusive growth.

Therefore, Social Services Europe recommend the following measures in order to meet the needs of recruitment and retention in the social services sector:

ON EU LEVEL:

- I. Ensure that **sufficient and sustainable funding** is directed towards the financing of quality services and improving the attractiveness of the sector for current and future employees, in line with a social investment approach – e.g. by means of the European Semester, the Structural Funds and the Social Investment Package;
- II. Actively **promote civil dialogue structures in the sector, at both national and European level**, which would allow organisations to exchange experiences and good practice, help to raise awareness of the sector's employment potential across Europe, and work together on common issues such as recruitment and retention;
- III. Promote social dialogue in the sector, e.g. by establishing a **European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the Social Services Sector**, which would help employers and employees to collectively discuss and negotiate how challenges related to the attractiveness of the sector, such as pay and working conditions, health and safety at the workplace or professional training and career development – can best be addressed;
- IV. **Support efforts to ensure a more diverse workforce with more gender-balance, opportunities for career paths as well as work-life balance** in the social services sector. For example by implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights and promoting Human Resource strategies, which incorporates the New Skills Agenda and ensures life-long learning;
- V. **Ensure better access to funding schemes** such as Horizon 2020 to strengthen research, data collection and innovation in the social services sector.



ON NATIONAL LEVEL:

- I. **Social services must be recognised as a social and economic investment rather than a cost**, and national policy makers must insure adequate public investment into the social services sector to create employment opportunities for both social services workers and individuals in the labour market who receive support from these services;
- II. National policy makers must **recognise and value social services work and its contribution to social well-being, social inclusion as well as inclusive growth**, and reflect this through social policies and the allocation of financial resources to ensure decent pay and working conditions in the social services sector. National Policy Makers should also **work towards reducing high levels of informality in social services**;
- III. Support social service providers with **pro-active public policies to improve the attractiveness of the sector**, in order to unlock its important job creation potential. Improving employment conditions in the sector is essential to recruit sufficient well-skilled and trained staff that are able to deliver quality services;
- IV. Promote and **encourage educational and training providers to develop training schemes in the social services sector**, and support schemes that encourage young people to enter the social services sector;
- V. **Support opportunities for life-long learning**, e.g. trainings in management and the design and development of services, in order to increase involvement of the social services workers, and improve retention in the sector.

Social Services Europe is the largest European umbrella organisation representing not-for-profit social and health care providers. Our members are at the forefront of ensuring accessible, affordable and quality services for all people in Europe. We believe that investing in the social services sector brings both social and economic returns.

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