

# THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS AND ITS POTENTIAL TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE EUROPE FOR ALL

## EUROPEAN EXPERT GROUP ON THE TRANSITION FROM INSTITUTIONAL TO COMMUNITY-BASED CARE

### INTRODUCTION

The European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care (EEG)<sup>1</sup> has prepared its recommendations to the implementation of the [European Semester](#) and the integration of the [European Pillar of Social Rights \(Social Pillar\)](#) in the European Semester.

The Social Pillar is a European Commission initiative which is intended to act as driver for social change in Europe and serve as a guide towards efficient employment and social outcomes when responding to current and future challenges. The Social Pillar includes twenty principles under three chapters: equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion.

Over one million adults and children, including adults and children with disabilities, are still living in long-stay residential institutions across Europe. A horizontal and efficient implementation of the Social Pillar's principles, especially those on disability, childcare, long-term care, healthcare and housing, would give the opportunity to effectively protect social rights, improve the quality of lives and promote the right to family and independent living. The adequate implementation of the Social Pillar would also be in line and provide a tool for the enforcement on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) which has been ratified by the European Union (EU) and, to date, 27 Member States.

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<sup>1</sup> The EEG is a broad coalition of organisations representing people with care or support needs (including children, persons with disabilities, the homeless and people experiencing mental health problems) and their families, as well as service providers, public authorities and intergovernmental organisations. For more information see: <https://deinstitutionalisation.com/>.

The Social Pillar should be used in synergy with the European Semester to promote a person-centred approach in the reform of social security systems in order to ensure availability of personal assistance and/or adequate individualised support to enjoy rights on an equal basis, to develop family- and community-based services (i.e. social, health and housing services) and work-life balance measures.

## TRANSITION TOWARDS COMMUNITY-BASED CARE: WHY THE SOCIAL PILLAR MATTERS

While often understood as the mere closure of institutions, the transition from institutional to community and family-based care refers to the process of developing a range of services in the community, including prevention, family support, education, employment and housing.

The recently adopted [General Comment on Article 19](#) of the UN CRPD clarifies that the transition from institutional to community-based care is underpinned by the right to be included in the community, which means “living a full social life and having access to all services offered to the public and to support services offered to persons with disabilities to enable them to be fully included and participate in all spheres of social life. These services can, among others, relate to housing, transport, shopping, education, employment, recreational activities and all other facilities and services offered to the public, including social media.”<sup>2</sup>

In relation to children, the [Commission Staff Working Document “Taking stock of the 2013 Recommendation on Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage”](#) reaffirms the importance of family support in preventing, in so far as possible, children’s removal from their family. Where alternative care is necessary, the focus should be on quality care and support, including during the transition to adulthood, as outlined in the [United Nations Guidelines for the alternative care of children](#).

With its focus on social dimension and change, the Social Pillar has the potential to positively contribute to the transition to community and family-based care beyond the closure of institutions. The EEG welcomes the inclusion of principles on inclusive education, training and life-long learning, active support to employment, work-life balance, childcare and support to children, social protection, health care, inclusion of persons with disabilities, long-term care, and housing and assistance for the homeless.

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<sup>2</sup> Article 16 (b) of the General Comment on Article 19 of the UN CRPD.

# EEG RECOMMENDATIONS

In his [2017 State of the European Union's speech](#), President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker strongly urged Member States to come to an agreement on the Social Pillar and sign its proclamation. Once formally adopted, the Social Pillar will start being implemented through the [Social Scoreboard](#) within the framework of the European Semester, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the post-2020 EU budget and Cohesion Policy.<sup>3</sup>

Considering the great potential that the Social Pillar has for promoting social inclusion, the EEG strongly believes that an adequate and efficient implementation of the Social Pillar is crucial and recommends that the EU:

- 1. Defines a clear implementation plan for each principle of the Social Pillar** that promotes a life-cycle, person-centred, integrated and rights-based approach, in line with existing EU and international legislation, and ensures that the transition to family and community-based care is fully mainstreamed through the implementation of all principles, not only those that specifically mention community-based services;
- 2. Reforms the European Semester process to rigorously apply the Social Scoreboard** to increase Member States' commitment and action on social inclusion; and ensure that progress towards the rights laid out in the Social Pillar are adequately reflected in European and national European Semester documents; this should be done by including a strong social dimension and a scoreboard that is given the same importance as the economic component and macroeconomic scoreboards;
- 3. Puts in place a rigorous and transparent monitoring system** to ensure that funds are being used to support the implementation of the Social Pillar and regularly collects data to track how funds, especially the European Structural and Investment Funds, are used by the Member States to support the transition to family and community-based care;
- 4. Meaningfully involves civil society** organisations at the European and national level in all stages of the implementation and monitoring of the Social Pillar and the use of EU funds;

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<sup>3</sup> For more information, see the [Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights](#).

5. **Creates as many synergies as possible among policies and funding** to integrate the Social Pillar in all areas;
6. **Proposes packages with legislative and non-legislative initiatives** linked to each right of the Social Pillar in the near future;
7. **Further invests in the Social Pillar when designing the post-2020 EU budget and Cohesion Policy** to allocate adequate financial resources to facilitate the transition from institutional to community-based care and make the social, health and housing sector, as well as the education system and the labour market, more inclusive.<sup>4</sup>

## Material

For more detailed information on the Social Pillar, read EEG members' positions on the initiative:

- ❖ [COFACE Families Europe](#)
- ❖ [Eurochild](#)
- ❖ [European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities \(EASPD\)](#)
- ❖ [European Disability Forum \(EDF\)](#)
- ❖ [European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless \(FEANTSA\)](#)
- ❖ [European Network on Independent Living \(ENIL\)](#)
- ❖ [Inclusion Europe](#)
- ❖ [Lumos](#)
- ❖ [Mental Health Europe \(MHE\)](#)

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on the EEG's position of the post-2020 EU Budget, see [the EEG response to the reflection paper on the future of EU finances](#).