

EPSU/FESE Joint Position Paper on Recruitment and Retention in Social Services



UPDATE: 15 January: Newly translated versions with improved layout - links below

(26 June 2020) Due to changing demographics, labour mobility and increasing family diversity, the social services sector is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in Europe. Over the past 10 years, it has created more than 2 million jobs - and is expected to further grow significantly over the next few decades. Despite the growing demand for accessible, affordable and quality social services, the sector often remains unattractive, with low salaries and harsh working conditions. As a result, recruitment and retention are difficult in practice.

The access to “affordable long-term care services of good quality” is enshrined in article 18 of the European Pillar of Social Rights. In order to give answers for the growing challenges for social services it is necessary that the EU and the EU Member States commit to good and guaranteed services and decent work. This

means sufficient financing and staffing, real social partnership and free trade union activity in order to improve working conditions and salaries by way of collective agreements, and well qualified staff as well as free access for social services for all EU citizens.

This joint position paper is the product of the discussion and inputs gathered during the 3rd Thematic Seminar of the PESSIS + project “Recruitment and Retention in Social Services: Improving the sector’s attractiveness” as well as the main demands developed by EPSU and the European Social Employers in those years and summarized in the scoping documents presented during the seminar. It examines the impact of working conditions, gender imbalances, financial constraints and ageing of the workforce on the sector and puts forward several approaches to face the sector’s recruitment and retention challenges, covering the following issues:

- Decent work, organisational development & work-life balance
- The image of the sector
- Occupational Safety & Health
- Training and lifelong learning
- Migrant workforce and care drain
- Digitalisation
- Care in underserved and rural areas & in big cities
- Emerging issues: non-standard forms of work, new models of care, migration

To conclude, the ILO finds that “If not addressed properly, current deficits in care work and its quality will create a severe and unsustainable global care crisis and further increase gender inequalities in the world of work.” This paper puts forth ideas and demands by EPSU and FESE on how to address these deficits and provides a basis for further fruitful and necessary discussion.

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