



International Federation of Social Workers
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Social workers for transformational and sustainable social protection in Europe

Making the most of the European Pillar of Social Rights for a better life for people goes far beyond the area of employment. Strengthening peoples' resilience and enhancing their capability to react to risks of life require sustainable and transformative social protection.

Making the Social Rights a reality on the ground needs an active engagement of social workers. Some people's ability to use social rights for a better life is affected by factors such as their age, disability, income or geographical location. Social workers help people solve and cope with such problems in their everyday lives, reducing fears and giving assurance and confidence to ensure that such problems do not result in a further impoverishment.

Background

On 17 November 2017, EU leaders proclaimed the Pillar of Social Rights at the Social Summit in Gothenburg, Sweden. This proclamation has been signed by all EU members. It is directly aimed at fulfilling people's essential needs, and towards ensuring better enactment and implementation of social rights. The European Pillar of Social Rights has 3 main categories:

- Equal opportunities and access to the labour market
- Fair working conditions
- Social protection and inclusion

IFSW Europe contributed to the consultation phase through the European Social Platform and the European Anti- Poverty Network (EAPN) and IFSW Europe also did a statement. IFSW Europe welcomed the new initiative but like many organisations was sceptical about whether it would be implemented. Ana Radulescu, IFSW Europe Vice President, joined the Delegation of The European Social Platform on the "Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth" in Gothenburg, on 17 November. The event gathered together large numbers of world leaders and European social networks.

The European Pillar of Social Rights sets out 20 key principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems. It is primarily conceived for the EU Member States, but it is applicable to all wishing to be part of it.

"With the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, we have put investing in skills, reducing inequalities, social fairness and inclusive growth on top of the agenda. We now need to keep track of the performance of the Member States on the principles and rights included in the Pillar, to make them a reality on the ground."

Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, in charge of Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

Building social protection systems that meet the real needs of all people and the realisation of all people's social rights requires the active engagement of social workers. IFSW Europe launched in 2017 a project, called "Social workers for transformational and sustainable social protection in Europe 2017-2019", aiming to influence the development of social protection under the European Pillar of Social Rights. In their everyday work social workers witness the rise of economic vulnerabilities, when people do not receive proper social care and support. The need to adapt to current and future challenges requires better access to social protection. Taking part in building the social welfare systems in the 21st century Europe, social workers must ensure that the voice of most disadvantaged and excluded members of society is heard, social rights of everyone are protected and that social inequalities are addressed.

"The Social Pillar requires a joint effort going well beyond the Commission, the European Parliament and Member States. Indeed it also requires action from social partners and civil society. At the moment European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF) already provides extensive funding in the Pillar domains. In May 2018 the Commission comes forward with proposals for the next Multi annual Financial Framework. A monitoring on progress on the Pillar in Member States will take place through the European Semester."

Jeroen Jutte, European Commission, head of unit employment and social aspects of the European Semester

Social Worker ensure that no-one is left behind

People facing social vulnerability have disproportionate exposure to risk and a decreased ability to use social rights for improving their life.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) World Social Protection Report 2014/15 "Building economic recovery, inclusive development and social justice" shows that about 73% of the world population have no or a very restricted access to social protection systems, meaning that three out of four people in the world live in social insecurity if not in extreme poverty with no access to comprehensive social protection, when they lose income due to personal, economic or environmental crisis.

New forms of poverty and social deprivation arose and proliferated. A number of changes and challenges caused by globalization, an aging population and technological shifts have hit the already vulnerable population and increased the number of people living below the poverty line.

Social workers see the poverty every day in people's lives but they also see growing resilience in people who make use of social work services. Social workers play an

active role in helping people through the crises and disasters that they may encounter in their life path while ensuring that no one is left behind.

“We have to ensure that all workers, no matter what type of job they have, should be guaranteed two basic rights: a clear and decent labour contract and full access to social protection throughout their life. (...) The time has come and we need the involvement of everyone. Social partners and civil society must engage in this debate, they are the ones who better know the reality on the ground!”

Maria João Rodrigues, MEP, Committees of Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)

IFSW Statement “Role of Social Work in Social Protection Systems: The Universal Right to Social Protection” shows how social workers are enabling people to understand their rights and learn how to use them for shaping a better life.

The International Federation of Social Workers calls on the European Parliament and the European Council to strengthen the Pillar in the following ways:

1. Jobs are not enough. New forms of poverty have emerged and employment and work are no longer a guarantee for protection against poverty. Working Poor are the fastest growing segment of the impoverished population with devastating effects on the next generation. Too little attention is paid to promoting social policies and investment in social services that focus on lowering the vulnerability and contributing to resilience.

2. Investment in social services is the foundation for sustainable economic development. Social workers have been consistent advocates that confident and engaged communities with good social structures are an essential foundation for sustainable economic development. As people become empowered they become engaged in economic activity and this leads to increased social and economic outcomes. Social protection helps to stabilize economic development as it has been demonstrated that for every \$1 spent on social protection yields a \$3 return to the economy (IFSW, “Role of Social Work in Social Protection Systems: The Universal Right to Social Protection”).

3. Social Workers involvement is a condition for a sustainable social protection in Europe. Social workers focus is to get the right social services to support people find sustainable answers to social problems. A society cannot progress economically when an important part of the country lives in social exclusion. Without social workers and without their skills a country cannot progress in term of social inclusion.

The Commission cannot alone animate the Pillar – it requires a joint effort going well beyond the Commission, the EP and Member States. Indeed it also requires action from social partners and civil society.

Jeroen Jutte, European Commission, head of unit employment and social aspects of the European Semester

Social workers through the International Federation of Social Workers, continue their commitment in building a sustainable social protection in Europe and make visible

the impact and benefits of social services in people's lives and on social and economic growth.

Relevant IFSW Statements:

*IFSW, The Role of Social Work in Social Protection Systems: The Universal Right to Social Protection

<http://ifsw.org/policies/the-role-of-social-work-in-social-protection-systems-the-universal-right-to-social-protection/>

*IFSW Supports: A Social Protection Floor for Everyone

<http://ifsw.org/news/ifsw-supports-a-social-protection-floor-for-everyone/>