

## ESIP Memorandum for the 2024-2029 European Legislature

### Europe's social security systems:

#### essential actors for a more resilient and prosperous European Union

Faced with multiple global crises over the past decades, social security systems have proven their effectiveness and resilience as a key pillar of the EU's social market economy, acting both as a social buffer as well as economic stabilisers. It should be widely acknowledged that social protection is an investment in people, which yields returns for society as a whole.

The European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP) is the representative in Brussels of over 45 social security institutions across Europe delivering social security benefits to over 385 million European citizens. In light of our members' broad expertise and insight into the daily challenges of social security, ESIP is uniquely qualified to inform EU decision-making, offer expertise, ensure that EU initiatives are fit for purpose and support the day-to-day work of national institutions.

Furthermore, our aim is to raise awareness on the social protection challenges to be addressed in the future and provide recommendations for EU-level actions, building on the expertise and experience of ESIP members.

### Our main fields of expertise



Social security



Healthcare



Pensions



Family &  
social inclusion



Disability &  
rehabilitation

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## EU policies for better and more efficient Social Protection

### SOCIAL PROTECTION IN ALL POLICIES

#### Mainstream social protection and its funding across EU policies

Social protection systems are an integral component of society and the economy. EU policymakers across all fields should take into account the impact of their policies on national social protection systems.

The overarching goal should be to reinforce the foundations of the solidarity mission of social security institutions, while upholding the principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and in line with the recommendations made by the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE).



#### Our recommendations for EU actions to reinforce social protection

- Ensure that **access to social protection remains a priority** for the next European Commission's mandate and is mainstreamed across EU policies via the designation of a Commission's Vice-President
- Recognise the **specificities of statutory social security institutions** managing services of public interest and exclude them from the definition of companies or undertakings in future EU legislation in line with CJEU jurisprudence
- Ensure that **social and health objectives are complementary and equally important as fiscal objectives** in the revision of the EU's economic governance framework
- **Financing of social protection should be regarded** as a resource to meet future challenges, **not as a cost**
- Keep the **EPSR as compass** for the European social agenda and use the opportunity of the Action Plan review in 2025 to include answers to new challenges and concerns
- Better translate the principles of the EPSR in the European Semester and **identify indicators** based on already collected data for each principle of the Pillar
- Follow up on the **implementation of the 2019 Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed**, in full respect of the specificities of national social protection systems
- Ensure that **health policies** are not designed as mere industrial policies and **are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**
- Create a European **alert mechanism for the fight against social security fraud**

## SOCIAL SECURITY COORDINATION



### Enhance cooperation among social security institutions and with EU decision-makers

Social security coordination is key in ensuring a smooth and fair mobility of European citizens within the EU. There is a need to create bridges by promoting more efficient national and international cooperation among social security institutions while ensuring a systemic interaction with European decision-makers. At the same time, the specificities of national social security systems should be duly recognised in every EU-level initiative. It is crucial to build on the technical and field expertise of social security institutions and consult them at the very early stages of relevant European initiatives aimed at promoting access to social protection. This approach would increase the chances of turning EU initiatives into pragmatic and applicable solutions that facilitate the day-to-day business.

### Our recommendations for EU actions to improve coordination among social security institutions and with EU decision-makers

- **Update the EU legislation on social security coordination**, flanking the changes with appropriate means and promoting the mutual understanding of the new provisions
- Support the exchange of initiatives and practices by Member States to **facilitate the correct application of** Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI) and EU regulations via common digital solutions standards
- Measure the phenomenon of **new forms of cross-border mobility** (e.g. telework, remote work) and its impact on social security and prospectively monitor emerging forms of work. Foster a **continuous dialogue with social security institutions** on how to address these issues with new tools or adaptation of the legislation
- **Ensure that European policies, guidelines and recommendations are implementable on the national level**, by means of early and timely coordination with social security institutions
- Use the opportunity of the 2024 assessment to look into the **European Labour Authority's (ELA)** activities supporting social security institutions and, if needs be, propose ways to improve this support
- **Facilitate the exchange of national best practices** across social security sectors for a fairer treatment of the insured citizens. It would include collection of contributions, fraud, undeclared work as well as addressing the non-take-up of rights, promoting and incentivising the development of digital tools



## Prevention & Healthcare for all EU citizens

### AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE, SUSTAINABLE HEALTH SYSTEMS

#### Support social protection systems in providing access to affordable and high-quality healthcare

The core mission of Statutory Health Insurances (SHI) is to provide access to affordable and high-quality healthcare to meet the needs of all patients. SHI pursue their mission while facing a double set of challenges, systemic and contextual. On the one hand, they are confronted with the rising burden of chronic diseases and combined with new infectious pathogens and dangerous chemicals at work. On the other hand, healthcare payers are often faced with the conundrum of high prices and lack of proof of benefit for patients of new medicines and treatments coming to the market. Guaranteeing access to affordable and quality medicinal products is in the best interest of patients and serves the sustainability of solidarity-based healthcare systems.



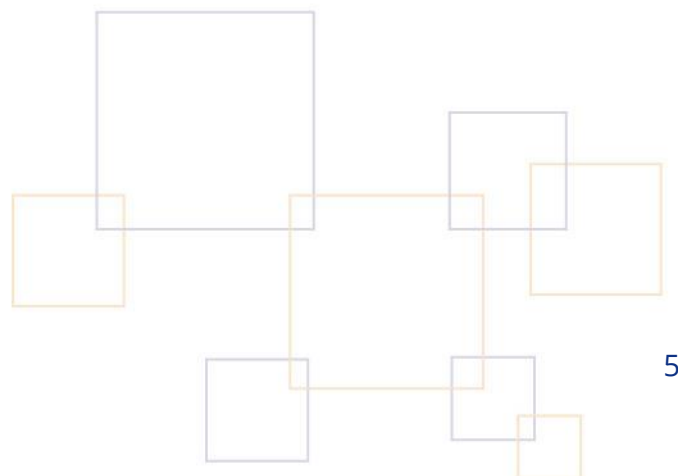
### Our recommendations for EU actions to promote prevention through EU policies

- Invest in **disease prevention** through the **'One Health' approach** and promote preventive care via targeted health awareness programmes
- Promote a culture of prevention at work, prioritise **occupational health and safety policies** e.g. limiting exposure to dangerous materials and striving towards a Vision Zero approach to work-related deaths as enshrined in the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027
- Raise awareness on the importance to **maintain access to healthcare in remote areas** to avoid the creation of new medical deserts and support the exchange of best practices of innovative solutions to ensure a balanced geographical coverage
- Continue the **European Beating Cancer Plan's** implementation, prioritising prevention and early detection as well as equitable access to evidence-based and affordable treatments
- Develop a framework for **mental health** to promote prevention of psychosocial risks at work, facilitate affordable access to adequate psychological and psychotherapeutic assistance when necessary as well as effective return to school and work strategies



## Our recommendations for EU actions to support access to high-quality and affordable healthcare

- Ensure access to affordable, high-quality, integrated, evidence-based healthcare. **Access to affordable medicines must remain a core priority** for the next European Commission
- Keep **sustainability** of healthcare systems at the centre of efforts to diversify and strengthen supply chain resilience
- **Reinforce competition in pharmaceuticals**; assess the impact of mergers and acquisitions on the prices and quality of innovation
- Promote better **foresight** of new therapeutics in the development pipeline, to ensure that competent authorities are better prepared to assess upcoming products
- Improve European cooperation towards equitable access to medicines for all patients, exploring ways to facilitate **joint procurement** mechanisms without impeding parallel national procedures
- Foster the activities of the Group of **National Competent Authorities on Pricing and Reimbursement** (NCAPR), including mutual learning on payment models
- Ensure that the new legislative framework on **digital health**, particularly the European Health Data Space (EHDS), is **implementable and consistent** with the national and EU legislation as well as existing national infrastructures, to avoid duplication and/or burdensome adaptation of existing systems



## Challenges for Social Security systems

### DIGITALISATION

**Support social protection systems in making the most of digitalisation without leaving anyone behind**

Digitalisation is reshaping our social security systems at all levels. New digital tools and services have the potential to improve social protection processes for the benefit of the insured while facilitating information exchange among social security institutions. Digital solutions must remain citizen-oriented tools for better access to social security services. Nevertheless, some population groups risk being left behind due to the digital divide.



### Our recommendations for EU actions to support digitalisation of social security institutions

- Promote the development of **interoperable digital solutions** at European level to improve the **efficiency** of information exchange among social security institutions in order to facilitate **fair mobility** with adequate social protection across borders
- EU projects and initiatives in the field of **digitalisation of social security** coordination should match the **systems' needs**. It is therefore imperative that they are consistent and implementable reflecting the specificities and differences amongst national social security systems
- Launch calls for proposals on **digitalising communication** about the entitlement to all social security benefits
- Ensure that EU digital projects in the field of social security prove their added value, based on **user experience**, with the effective involvement of social security institutions in all stages of preparation
- Make sure that **artificial intelligence (AI)** solutions in health and social protection systems improve care and provision of health services to all citizens
- Implement efficient measures to **increase digital literacy** among the socially disadvantaged and vulnerable groups to eliminate access barriers
- Allocate EU funds to **strengthen digital skills** within national social security institutions and ensure that digital solutions are user-friendly & tailored to citizens' needs
- **Facilitate coordination** by promoting the exchange of best practices and business' needs to define common technical standards



## DEMOGRAPHY

### Support social protection systems in addressing the challenges of a changing demographic context

Europe is facing an unprecedented situation due to demographic changes, population ageing and in-work, old-age poverty resulting to a shrinking workforce and an increasing need for social and healthcare services. This situation puts social security systems at high risk.

As recommended in the report of the High-Level Group on the future of social protection and the welfare state, a life-cycle approach is necessary to ensure adequate and equitable access to family benefits and childcare to health care services and pensions across the lifespan. Such an approach would reduce gender inequalities, guarantee a better work-life balance while securing the sustainability of social protection systems. Additionally, it will have a positive economic impact thanks to the increased participation in the labour market, therefore increasing social contributions and tax revenues.

### Our recommendations for EU actions to support social protection in light of demographic challenges

- Ensure an adequate implementation of the **European Child Guarantee** and the upward convergence towards the implementation of the revised Barcelona targets, with the involvement of the relevant social security experts
- Promote the continuous and overarching application of the **health in all policies (HiAP) approach** with a view to active and healthy ageing by prevention, access to high-quality and affordable care, as well as increased occupational health and safety
- Provide **EU funding opportunities** and promote the exchange of best practices to further develop accessible (geographically and financially) **long-term care (LTC) systems**, including home-based solutions
- Promote the **social inclusion of people with disabilities**; raise awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities covered by Principle 17 of the EPRS and foster their active participation in the labour market, building on the assessment of disability and capacity to work with the use of the ICF model



## ENVIRONMENT

### Support social protection systems in addressing climate change while remaining environmentally sustainable

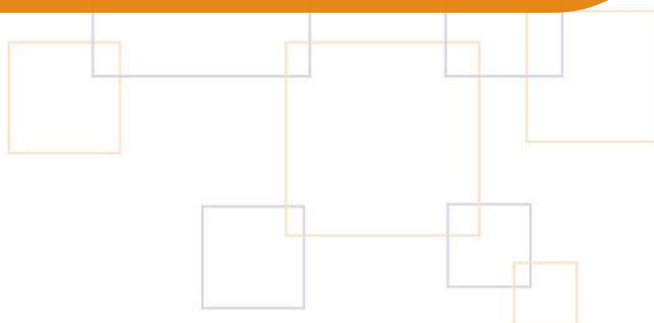
Climate change creates challenges for social security systems that could lead to additional unforeseen expenditure. Health risks, domestic, international migration resulting from major climate events, as well as the spread of new pathogens including antibiotic-resistant bacteria put the sustainability of healthcare systems at stake.

The increased occurrence of natural disasters may also create new social needs for citizens and businesses. The transition to a sustainable and climate-friendly economy implies structural changes in the labour market, with potential consequences on the stability of social security systems' contribution base. In light of these new risks and challenges that the Social Climate Fund seeks to address, socially disadvantaged and vulnerable groups should not be left behind.



### Our recommendations for EU actions to support social protection systems in fighting climate change & becoming environmentally sustainable

- Conduct **an impact assessment on the expected burden of climate and environmental changes** on social security systems and discuss its conclusions and possible sustainable solutions with social security institutions
- Promote social and employment policies to **maintain the contribution base of social security systems** stable overall, in a context of evolving labour markets
- When implementing green transition policies, there should be efforts to **minimise their impact on workers and vulnerable groups**. Keep work environment healthy, considering occupational health and safety risks from the early stages of the transition process
- **Foster the green transition of social security and healthcare institutions** by supporting them in measuring their own environmental impact, facilitate the exchange of good practices to this end and **allocate EU funds** to finance the respective initiatives







## EU CRISIS FINANCIAL SUPPORT

### Support sustainable and inclusive welfare states in a context of multiple crises

Social security systems were essential players in the response to the COVID-19 outbreak: they built crucial safety nets while supporting our European economy including through short-time work schemes and various exceptional benefits provided rapidly to offset the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

Today they remain essential to cushioning existing systemic challenges, from population ageing to the climate change crisis. At EU level, support for investments and reforms to adapt to these crises is of great added value and therefore social protection policy should be designed jointly with social insurance institutions.

### Our recommendations for EU actions to support sustainable welfare states

- Ensure dedicated financial support for social security administrations under the next **Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF)**
- Further promote the possibility to **access EU technical support** for the implementation of reforms, including of social security, via the Technical Support Instrument
- Provide a thorough **analysis of the use and impact of SURE** and possible subsequent proposals for a continuation of this instrument

### About the European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP)

The European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP) represents 45 national statutory social insurance organisations in 17 EU Member States and Switzerland, active in the field of health insurance, pensions, occupational disease and accident insurance, disability and rehabilitation, family benefits and unemployment insurance. ESIP and its members aim to preserve high-profile social security for Europe, reinforce solidarity-based social insurance systems and maintain European social protection quality. ESIP builds strategic alliances for developing common positions to influence the European debate and is a consultation forum for European institutions and other multinational bodies active in the field of social security.

