

Sweden

Each year, the ESN European Semester Group follows the European Commission's cycle of policy coordination with EU Member States known as the European Semester and produces a report based on a questionnaire completed by public social services authorities on the social situation in European countries with a particular focus on social services. This country profile identifies the most important common challenges facing social services as reported by ESN members in Austria, related to three principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and makes recommendations for the 2023 European Semester. The full report, with cross-country analysis of all the participating countries is available [here](#).

1. Children's services

1.1. Key issues

Sweden still struggles to provide equal opportunities for children from different backgrounds, including low-income and migrant families. Furthermore, Swedish population is still spatially segregated. This translates into fewer opportunities for children coming from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Low public trust in social services has also been a problem for years. Earlier last year, social services became the target of a 'hate campaign' with accusations of discrimination against certain groups. Social services need to rebuild public trust to be able to fulfil their mission and provide support to vulnerable populations. Some of these problems are to be solved by the social services legislation to be adopted early in 2023. It is intended, firstly, to allow easier access to services for children and families, reduce bureaucracy and change perceptions of services. In addition, an action plan for the implementation of the child guarantee was introduced in March 2022. It aims, first and foremost, to strengthen child protection and ensure that no child grows up in conditions of domestic abuse.

1.2 Recommendations

The greatest hopes for improving the quality of child support services provision are linked to the adoption of The Social Services Act. It is imperative that the new legislation is accompanied by adequate resources to realise its objectives. In addition, there is a need for better national data on child support and child protection issues and tools to analyse them.

2. Long-term care

2.1. Key issues

Like most EU countries, Sweden faces unfavourable demographic trends. The number of older people is increasing, while the number of people of working age is decreasing. Acquiring sufficient staff for the care sector is a major challenge, the scale of which will only increase. A significant proportion of care staff are of retirement age and new recruits are in short supply. Technical and digital advances are being made but there are still challenges in terms of large numbers of older people not having the ability to use new technology. During the Covid-19 pandemic the issue of loneliness and lack of social contacts was an

important factor for older people receiving community-based services. This is still a general challenge for the future.

At national level, the government's 'Elderly Care Boost' is the most prominent measure being carried out to improve the situation for long term care. This is part of the NRRP and financed with 1.7 billion SEK during 2022 and the same amount for 2023. In total the investment in services for older people amount to 4.58 billion SEK. The programme aims to train care professionals, in particular carers and first line supervisors. In addition, funding will be available for paid study leave and compensation will be provided for employers to ensure adequate staffing while training takes place. As well as funding training in the form of paid study leave, compensation is also given to workplaces to ensure adequate staffing during training periods. At the local, regional and national level a process for transition of care is also underway. The service planning paradigm is changing - moving from an organisation-centred to a person-centred approach.

2.2. Recommendations

Qualitative long-term care programmes should include all populations in need, without being limited to older people. This is especially true for people with mental health problems and people with disabilities. Long-term care services should be implemented around the principle of person-centeredness. Likewise, all plans and interventions must take into account the urgent need to recruit and retain staff and ensure the stability of the care workforce.

3. Support for homeless people

3.1. Key issues

Lack of adequate housing and spatial segregation of residents remain huge problems in Sweden. Living in certain neighbourhoods

is associated with stigma. At the same time, the high cost of housing means that the phenomenon of homelessness persists. In 2022, the government report 'Lower threshold for a good home' was presented, but it only starts the discussion on the above issues. In July 2022, the Swedish government presented a national homelessness strategy, the first since 2009. The strategy, if successively implemented, will provide a more preventive approach, but there is still a need for adequate and affordable housing to be provided. The strategy is accompanied by funding, but there is a risk that the amount will not match the anticipated needs.

3.2. Recommendations

The renewed homelessness strategy could be strengthened by making 'housing first and housing led' approaches as preferred choice in supporting people in homelessness situations.



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