

BRIEFING
PAPER
#106

REVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN ASSESSMENT REPORT ON ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Proclaimed in 2017 at the Gothenburg Summit by the European Parliament, Council, and Commission, the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) sets out 20 principles to strengthen social rights in Europe. **Principle 20 on Access to essential services** provides, in a non-exhaustive list, that “everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications”¹.

The Pillar is not legally binding for either the European Commission (EC) or member states, and unlike most other EPSR principles which have inspired EU legislation, policies and strategies, access to essential services has largely been overlooked².

The European Green Deal, the EU’s strategy to reach the climate neutrality objective by 2050, and its ‘Fit for 55’ packages give the Pillar a crucial role in guiding the EU’s climate and environmental policies to ensure a socially just transition.

For SOLIDAR, a socially just transition to equitable and sustainable societies and economies requires a profound societal transformation that ensures human well-being within planetary boundaries. This in turn involves rapid changes in our energy, mobility, communication and other systems, so access to high quality, affordable and accessible essential services is central to redistribute the benefits of the green transition and support the most vulnerable in the face of its negative impacts and the disproportionate effects of climate change on them.

The Report on Access to Essential Services, published by the EC in June 2023 was the first EU assessment on this issue³. This briefing paper reviews the EC’s report. It outlines the right to access essential services (A), provides summary and analysis of the Report (B), and a critique of the Commission’s approach with a set of recommendations (C).





A. THE RIGHT TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN CONTEXT

Access to essential services is provided in Chapter III of EPSR dedicated to social protection and inclusion. Rights to access to services are interwoven. Some EPSR principles protect access to services that are not considered “essential” but could be in theory, such as access to housing⁴. In addition, access to some “essential” services may be conditioned by access to “non-essential” ones. For example, access to childcare or healthcare can be constrained by a lack of access to transport, and access to clean water, sanitation and energy is conditioned by access to good quality housing. Access to essential services also requires adequate minimum income “ensuring a life in dignity and access to”⁵ (Principle 14), and limited access to essential services puts people “At risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion” (AROEPE). It is therefore difficult to decouple principle 20 from other principles in Chapter III.

EU primary legislation recognises the Union’s role in ensuring social protection and inclusion. Article 3(2) of the **Treaty on European Union** states that the Union “shall combat social exclusion and discrimination and shall promote social justice

and protection”⁶. Article 151 of the **Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union** tasks the Union and member states with ensuring “proper social protection...and combatting exclusion”⁷. This forms the legal basis for the European Union’s action on social rights. In addition, the Commission links essential services to services of general interest (SGIs)⁸ which include both economic and non-economic services. Non-economic services include the police, courts, and public administration, while services of general economic interest (SGEIs) are economic, delivering social benefits that would not be guaranteed by the free market.

Several articles in the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, protect access to essential services. Article 36 states: “the Union recognises and respects access to services of general economic interest... in order to promote the social and territorial cohesion of the Union”⁹. However, EU action, with regards to SGIs/SGEIs, is still limited to the application of state aid exemptions.

Article 34(3) recognises the right to social housing and housing assistance, and article 35 stipulates that “Everyone has the right of access to preventive health care and the right to benefit from medical treatment”¹⁰.

1 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “Launching a consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights”:
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0127&from=GA>

2 The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1606&langId=en>

3 Report on Access to Essential Services:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1592&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10595>

4 Launching a consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights”

5 Report on Access to Essential Services

6 Treaty on European Union:

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

7 Article 151, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12016E151>

8 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:
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017SC0201&from=IT>

9 Charter Of Fundamental Rights Of The European Union: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

10 Charter Of Fundamental Rights Of The European Union



Another key text is the **Council of Europe's (CoE) Revised European Social Charter**, which applies to signatory countries members of the CoE, within and beyond the EU. The revised Charter provides for the right to healthcare (articles 11 and 13), to housing (articles 16, 23 and 31) and to childcare (article 17)¹¹. However, many signatory parties have included exceptions on key provisions, with an average of 19% of the provisions not accepted¹². In addition, compliance with the Charter is left to the European Committee of Social Rights, which monitors implementation and hears complaints from civil society organisations but has no powers of enforcement¹³.

Despite shortcomings in the definition and in the enforcement of the right to essential services, the cited treaties and charters demonstrate the central role of the social dimension in key legislation, through which the Union and its member states have clearly committed to upholding social rights.

In the context of green transition in Europe, the EPSR can play an essential tool to strengthen the social benefits of policies under the European Green Deal ensuring that these are widely shared and that the costs are not born by the most vulnerable. Unfortunately, this was not the case as very few EGD policies were linked to the EPSR and the EPSR action plan only includes some references to the green transition.

B. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S REPORT

The Report on Access to Essential Services was presented in June 2023 as part of the initiatives outlined in the EPSR Action Plan. The Report is broken down into six parts, with five chapters dedicated to the six essential services listed in Principle 20. Each section presents an overview of the access to the service in question, and describes the measures put in place by both the EU and national governments for supporting access.

The introduction notes that access to essential services, including education, energy and transport, was severely restricted by sharp income falls during the COVID-19 pandemic and high inflation rates in 2022 and 2023, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. These crises have affected vulnerable groups the most. Price increases hinder access to essential services, especially for the most disadvantaged households, who often only received one-off and meagre state subsidies to be able to pay their energy bills.

Finally, the introduction suggests that member states are responsible for organising and providing essential services, with the EU having more of a supporting role through sectoral policies, regulatory frameworks, public procurement rules and financial support.

1. Access to water and sanitation:

According to the Report, around 4% of the population in EU is potentially at health risk due to limited access to quality drinking water. A staggering 1.5% has no access to basic sanitary

¹¹ European Social Charter (Revised): <https://rm.coe.int/168007cf93>

¹² Acceptance of the European Social Charter: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/stats-acceptance>

¹³ European Social Charter reporting system: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/reporting-system>



facilities (such as bath, shower, and a flushing toilet). Although this figure was halved in the past decade, it remains a significant problem in Romania (21,2%), Bulgaria, and to a lesser extent, in Latvia, and Lithuania, and 5.1% of people at Risk of Poverty and Exclusion (AROPE) and 20% of Roma people in the EU live without basic sanitation. In addition, people without a more stable place to live, in informal accommodation or in isolated communities generally face increased difficulties with access to clean water and sanitation. The relatively low cost of water and sanitation (generally 1-3% of household expenditure in the EU), suggests that access is not entirely related to the affordability of the service.

The EU's action to support access to water and sanitation comes in three main forms:

1. EU legislation provides minimum standards for wastewater management through the Urban Wastewater Directive of 1991 and drinking water through the revised Drinking Water Directive of 2020. The Commission proposed revising the Wastewater Directive in 2022 to improve access to sanitation. The proposal would obligate member states to identify people without or with limited access to sanitation, assess the reasons for such lack of access, and propose solutions.
2. The EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion, and participation 2020-2030 sets an EU-level target of at least 95% of Roma people having access to tap water.
3. In the period 2021-2027, €10.8 billion from the Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund will be spent to develop water and sanitation infrastructure (including 45,000 km of water supply pipes).

The development of water and sanitation infrastructures is often managed at local level. Measures to support low-income households include direct cash benefits, reduced tariffs, or

in-kind benefits. In Italy, for example, the State provides 50 litres of water per day and person for households benefiting from the “Water Bonus”.

These measures are often linked to other social protection measures such as minimum income schemes or subsidised rent. Given the regional and local character of water and sanitation, there are wide variations between and within countries. Some communities have started providing keys or passes to public showers or toilets for homeless people, while others try to improve access for Roma people. In France, for instance, municipalities with over 5 000 inhabitants must provide access to drinking water and sanitation in stopping places known to be used by Roma people.

2. Access to energy:

The lack of access to affordable energy is also known as energy poverty. Energy is by far the most expensive essential service. In 2022, a staggering 9.3% of the EU population had difficulties keeping their homes warm. Energy poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, involving factors such as low household income, high prices on energy and poor energy efficiency of accommodation. Skyrocketing energy prices impacted the AROPE households the most, creating vicious indebtedness cycles. Other at-risk groups include single-parent households, large families, pensioners, Roma people, people with disabilities and people in rural areas. Similarly, the aspect of low energy efficiency especially hurts AROPE households, who have less resources to devote to renovations. Tenants are also negatively affected by the energy inefficiency, relying on landlords' willingness to make the necessary investments.

The **Electricity and Gas Directives** require that member states take appropriate measures to tackle energy poverty, and the recast **Energy**



Efficiency Directive proposes to obligate member states to implement and finance energy efficiency improvements for vulnerable customers. The **Social Climate Fund**, which defines energy poverty, will support measures to improve energy efficiency and increase the share of renewable energy to eradicate energy poverty. Moreover, €6.2 billion in Cohesion funds will be spent in 2021-2027 to improve the energy efficiency of houses. Other measures promote the dissemination of best practices, such as the Energy Poverty Advisory Hub.

Member states have put in place a large variety of measures to support access to energy. However, 70% of the measures enacted in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine have not targeted people in energy poverty, which significantly reduce their efficacy to reduce inequality and improve the lives of marginalised groups. These measures have included reducing energy taxes, freezing tariffs, reducing distribution and network costs, extending measures and moratoriums on disconnection, new cash benefits (either one-off or ongoing), or long-term support to improve energy efficiency. The latter measures were criticised for not supporting enough households at risk, who faced barriers in accessing these schemes since they most often do not own their homes, were unable to pay large upfront costs, or could not access credit.

3. Access to transport:

Lack of access to transport, also known as transport poverty, is defined by the Social Climate Fund Regulation as the *“inability or difficulty to meet costs of transport (both public and private), or a lack of or limited access to transport needed for access to essential socio-economic services and activities”*. Transport poverty has several dimensions, including affordability, infrastructure, frequency of services, and the accessibility of physical and digital services.

Different groups face various restrictions: low-income households struggle with costs, those in rural areas may not be offered any services, and old people and people with disabilities may not be able to physically access services. Dealing with transport poverty is made harder by the lack of unified European indicators that monitor this access. The only notable survey on this issue was conducted in 2014 by Eurostat, showing that 2.4% of the EU population, and 5.8% of the AROPE population could not afford regular use of public transport. Since then, rationalisation and marketisation of public transport has resulted in both higher costs and the abandonment of routes. Digitalisation has had both positive and negative effects on access by on the one hand facilitating information on services, and access to them (as they digitalise) but on the other hand rendering access contingent on individually developed digital skills and access.

EU measures revolve around legislation and funding. The **European Accessibility Act** includes various obligations of information on transport services accessible to people with disabilities, for example. Regarding funding, €14.9 billion in cohesion funds will be allocated to urban transport in 2021-2027, mostly for infrastructure, rolling stock and digitalisation. “Connecting Europe Facility for Transport” invests in transport accessibility too.

At a national level, authorities generally support access to transport through measures such as reduced tariffs, monetary benefits, reimbursements, tax credits and in-kind benefits, such as free season tickets. These measures are mostly elaborated and implemented at local or regional level and target specific groups such as old people, young people, students, or people with disabilities. Measures include free school buses for children from low-income households or subsidised taxis in rural areas, especially for people needing to access



healthcare. Luxembourg and Tallinn are other examples of cities who have provided free public transport for everyone, similarly, residents of Malta benefit from free buses. There are similar initiatives albeit to a lesser extent in other towns and cities as well. These measures are effective because they specifically target and reach low-income groups.

4. Access to digital communications:

According to the report, 91% of EU households had access to the Internet at home in 2020. For those without Internet access, affordability was a key barrier. On average, around 2.4% of people in the EU could not afford to have an internet connection in 2022. This share was higher among people who are AROPE (7.6% on average in the EU), with Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary recording values of 25%, 20.5% and 16.5% respectively. The inability to afford internet access is correlated with material deprivation and being AROPE. The lack of access to digital communications widens existing social inequalities, excluding those without digital means or skills from vital services, such as education, finance and banking and an increasing number of public services.

The European Electronic Communications Code, which updated the Universal Service Directive, enshrines in law the Universal Service for electronic communications. Universal service is a concept developed in the EU. It is to ensure that all users can access quality services at an affordable price. This means that member states must ensure that all consumers on their territory have access to affordable and adequate broadband. The Code also contains provisions to ensure the accessibility of digital communications for people with disabilities. €13.6 billion will be spent from cohesion funds in 2021-2027 to support the digital transition, including

€2.3 billion on high-speed mobile and fixed internet infrastructures. There is no guarantee, however, that parts of these funds will be used to ensure that the digital transition is inclusive.

The **European Accessibility Act**, the **Web Accessibility Directive** and **Audio-Visual Media Services Directive**, seek to ensure access of people with disabilities to the Internet. Finally, several EU programmes, such as the European Social Fund and the Digital Europe Programme, support the development of digital skills and capacity.

At a national level, four member states (Germany, Lithuania, Portugal, and Finland) guarantee basic supply or no interruption in the supply of Internet access to households. Several other member states support low-income households' connectivity through adapted or capped tariffs, monetary benefits, or direct contribution through minimum income schemes. Some member states also provide support to cover broadband installation costs or buy digital equipment, especially for school.

5. Access to financial services:

Having a bank account is vital for social inclusion, as it is crucial for buying goods and services and receiving wages and benefits. Unfortunately, no appropriate EU assessment reports on access to financial services exist. World Bank data shows that in all EU states, except Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania, over 90% of the population over the age of 15 has a bank account. Lack of access to financial services is linked to high borrowing fees, lack of information regarding financial products, and legal requirements regarding residency and ID. Homeless people and migrants are the groups facing the greatest restrictions in accessing



financial services. Closures of bank branches and ATMs due to increased digitalisation of the financial sector have further reduced access for people with low digital skills.

The Payment Accounts Directive aims to provide the right of access to a payment account to all consumers resident in the EU. This means that everyone, including people with no fixed address and asylum seekers, must be able to access an account that allows for basic financial services (withdrawals, transfers, direct debits, and payment through a card) for free or for a reasonable fee with advantageous terms for vulnerable consumers. The Payment Accounts Directive has generally improved access to financial services, especially in member states that had no such legislation before its introduction.

6. Common trends:

The report concludes by identifying several common trends across the different services. 11.3% of the EU population (around 50 million people), it highlights, cannot afford at least one service (energy, transport, internet, or water and sanitation). Of these, 83% are unable to access one service only, 15% were unable to access two services and 2% all three. Most people who are unable to access energy, are unable to adequately heat their homes or are in arrears on energy payments. More than 80% were AROPE. That included a wide range of groups including people living in rural areas, people with disabilities, households with three or more children and single-parent households. Finally, the report concludes by criticising the lack of administrative data on affordability, both at EU and national level, which stifles the ability of public authorities and researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of support measures.

¹⁴ European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

¹⁵ Council adopts recommendation on adequate minimum income:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10504>

C. ISSUES WITH THE COMMISSION'S APPROACH

Although the Commission's report is a useful resource for evaluating access to certain essential services, its approach towards principle 20 of the Pillar of Social Rights has two main flaws. Principle 20 is largely overlooked (1) and it does not take into consideration that some EU policies restrict access to essential services (2).

1. Principle 20 overlooked and incomplete:

This report shows a stark contrast between Principle 20 and other principles, such as social protection, unemployment, safe working conditions, where far more efforts and progress were made. The only action envisaged regarding principle 20 in the **Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (2021)**, is to produce a report on the issue¹⁴. Other EU measures were adopted regarding individual essential services, but in the context of other policy areas, especially cohesion policy and competition policy.

What is missing from the Action Plan is a holistic approach ensuring access to essential services. Although some efforts were made in other fields of action to promote access to essential services, such as in the **Council Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Income**¹⁵, access to essential services remains largely overlooked in EU policies. For example, the **REPowerEU plan**, adopted in the wake of the energy crisis and to reduce the EU's dependence on Russian hydrocarbons, lacks any provisions to ensure access to energy



for vulnerable households¹⁶. This, even though the energy crisis and subsequent inflation have caused a major social crisis that has negatively affected low-income households and other at-risk groups. Similarly, although the **Energy Efficiency Directive of 2022** contains an article regarding vulnerable consumers, there is no mention of the problem by the Commission in the report on essential service – namely the inability of vulnerable consumers to access funding for energy efficiency renovations due to high upfront costs, lack of credit and not owning their own homes¹⁷.

Finally, although the report identifies adequate housing as a key component of access to energy, water, sanitation and digital communications, the right, provided in principle 19 of the EPSR, is not listed in principle 20 as essential, and the **EU's action to guarantee it is very limited**¹⁸.

2. EU policies have actively restricted access to essential services:

The report argues that the provision of essential services is a national competence, and that the EU can only support member states' efforts to provide them. This plays down the impact of EU policies which have since long constrained universal access to essential services. The three key examples are:

a. **The Commission's response to the Right2Water citizens' initiative**. The Right2Water campaign had three main goals: the recognition of the right

to water and sanitation in EU legislation, the end to liberalised water services, and the promotion of global access to water and sanitation. The report controversially argues that the Commission responded to the campaign's demands in the new 2020 Drinking Water Directive, but the campaign's organisers rejected these claims. The Directive includes no explicit obligation to provide safe and clean drinking water to all citizens. In addition, EU liberalisation and marketisation policies have further reduced communities' control of a vital resource, turning an essential service into an unaffordable commodity for too many people. Finally, the Commission has not taken any steps to ensure the global right of access to water¹⁹.

b. **The EU energy market liberalisation**: the Commission continued to support a liberalised energy market, while this has been a key factor in Europe's inability to ensure access to cheap and sustainable energy. The liberalisation of the electricity and gas market goes back to 1996 but the sector was totally opened in 2003, only to suffer from further liberalisation in 2009²⁰. In addition to the commodity, there was a significant push towards the privatisation of both generation and distribution infrastructures. The assumption was that competition would bring energy prices down. Instead, it has prompted speculation and market concentration, resulting in much higher prices for consumers, especially those with lower incomes. In 2014, the lowest-income households

¹⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, "RePowerEU Plan":

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A230%3AFIN&qid=1653033742483>

¹⁷ Directive (EU) 2023/1791 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2023 on energy efficiency:

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOL_2023_231_R_0001&qid=1695186598766

¹⁸ Promoting the Right to Housing at EU level:

https://www.cidob.org/publicaciones/serie_de_publicacion/cidob_policy_brief/promoting_the_right_to_housing_at_eu_level

¹⁹ <https://right2water.eu/news/member-states-deny-citizens-right2water-in-drinking>

²⁰ [Energy supply and energy security \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europa.eu/energy-supply-and-energy-security), briefing, the European Parliament, 2016.



in the EU spent around 9% of their budget on energy, a 50% increase from 2004. Privatising EU energy has brought about huge profits for private energy companies while hurting households and reducing access to energy²¹. This failure was made spectacularly evident during the recent energy crisis, but despite major and obvious flaws in the system, the Commission has made no attempts to overhaul it or improve energy regulation.

c. **The austerity rules:** these rules will further hamper access to essential services. The European commission plans to implement austerity rules, suspended since 2020 to deal with the economic consequences of the pandemic. If the rules are enacted, which limit member state budget deficits to 3% of GDP and debt to 60% of GDP, access to essential services will undoubtedly worsen. The rules, which provide no exemptions for socially or environmentally vital investments, will hurt public investments in both the green transition and the implementation of social rights. Not only does this so-called “fiscal discipline” directly impact the ability of public authorities to make investments in infrastructures required to ensure access, but second-order effects linked to weakened social protection and the welfare state will further reduce vulnerable groups’ ability to afford essential services²².

3. Conclusions and recommendations

- Despite shortcomings both in the definition and the enforcement of access to essential services, the right has solid grounding in EU law, with specific mention in numerous European treaties and charters through which member states have committed to upholding these rights.
- Accesses to “non-essential” and essential services are tightly intertwined, with the former often conditioning the latter. It is therefore difficult to decouple principle 20 from other principles in Chapter III. However, access to essential services is largely overlooked in EU policies. **The EU’s current approach of siloing policy measures according to singular principles is flawed and must be replaced by a more holistic one in the EPSR Action Plan and its follow up after 2025.**
- In this context, adequate housing is key to accessing energy, water, sanitation and digital communications. **Covered in principle 19 of the EPSR, access to housing should be considered as an essential service and listed in principle 20. Crucially, as recommended by the European Economic and Social Council, “Accelerating the renovation wave, paying particular attention to low-income households and tenants, e.g. through**

²¹ *Going Public: The failure of energy liberalisation:*

https://www.epsu.org/sites/default/files/article/files/Going%20Public_EPSU-PSIRU%20Report%202019%20-%20EN.pdf

²² *Revised EU economic governance: Are the European Commission’s proposals socially just and environmentally sustainable?:*

<https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/757/original/economic-governance-v7.pdf?1698920215>



non-repayable grants, competitive interest rates to support the renovation of the housing stock” is key. The risk of renoviction and increasing rents should also be addressed adequately.

- Liberalisation and marketisation of the water and sanitation sectors have reduced local communities’ control and access to a vital resource. **EU regulations should provide for an obligation to provide safe and clean drinking water to all people living in the EU and steps should be taken at EU level to promote a global right to access water²³.**
- Similarly, liberalisation and marketisation of public transport have resulted in higher costs, the abandonment of routes, and the lack of investments in rail and forms of infrastructure. This has limited access and boosted aviation with damaging consequences both on local transport and the environment. **A complete U-turn is required in EU transport policies that must be based on the idea that clean transport is a right and this must be accessible and affordable for everyone. This requires investments driven by the common good, both at EU and national level.**
- Privatising EU energy resulted in staggering profits for big business, deeply hurt households and reduced access to energy. **This structural failure must be addressed through a complete overhaul of the**

system and a review of EU regulations to protect consumers and households. Progressive taxation and redistribution of excess profits is an imperative to finance a fair green transition. We also second the EESC’s recommendation to *“Accelerating the deployment of renewable energy, including through better transposition of the EU legislative frameworks on public and stakeholder ownership and energy communities.”*

- If austerity rules, which limit member state budget deficits to 3% of GDP and debt to 60% of GDP, are enacted as the current discussions around the new EU economic governance seem to suggest, access to essential services will most likely worsen. Vital social and environmental investments will be deprioritised and severely hurt. **The EU should steer clear of these plans and genuinely reflect in its reports on previous mistakes and impacts of similar policies and measures on low-income households, the most vulnerable, and a transition to a more sustainable society.**
- **Far more must be done to mainstream the European Pillar of Social Rights across all aspects of EU policymaking, and to develop tools to assess affordability of essential services, both EU and national level, to enable public authorities and researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of support measures. To do so, disaggregated on all vulnerable groups must be collected and made**

²³ <https://right2water.eu/news/member-states-deny-citizens--right2water-in-drinking>



publicly available. The involvement of civil society working with marginalised groups in the planning, implementation and evaluation of essential services is key to improve the accessibility of such services.

- Policies and measures to ensure the implementation of the EPSR must be considered in the wider context of the EU's **just transition, which should address structural inequalities, and primarily protect vulnerable groups.** In practice, this means designing and implementing a just transition policy framework to integrate the environmental, social, and economic agenda – thereby aligning all climate and environmental policies – such as some of the elements of the EGD, including the Just Transition Mechanism and the Just Transition Fund, the Green Deal Industrial Plan - with the EPSR. Such a just transition policy framework should be equipped with a robust funding strategy to mobilise public and private investments in a just transition. At the same time, it should promote a sustainable economy, strengthen the European social model, and promote social and civil dialogue.

solidar

50 Avenue Des Arts.
Box 5, 2nd floor.
B1000 - Brussels
Belgium

Twitter: @SOLIDAR_EU
Facebook: SOLIDAR
www.solidar.org
solidar@solidar.org

Responsible editor:

Mikael Leyi

Authors:

Philip Freeman,
Sarah Zaarour

Designer:

Dagmar Bleyová

SOLIDAR is a European and worldwide network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working to advance social justice through a just transition in Europe and worldwide. Our over 50 member organisations are based in 27 countries (19 of which are EU countries) and include national CSOs in Europe, as non-EU, EU-wide and organisations active at the international level.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This document was funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.