



*Employers entrusted to deliver
Sustainability Growth Innovation*

Manifesto

EU elections 2024

SGIs for a
Competitive, Sustainable
and Just Europe

SGI EUROPE, ONE OF THE EU'S CROSS-INDUSTRY SOCIAL PARTNERS, IS ACTIVE IN THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL. SGI EUROPE MEMBERS ARE ENTERPRISES AND ASSOCIATIONS PROVIDING SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST (SGIS), PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, WHICH ARE ACTIVE AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS REGARDLESS OF THEIR LEGAL OWNERSHIP STATUS.

SGI Europe members are organisations active in fields such as:

- Central and local administrations
- Healthcare
- Education
- Housing
- Waste management
- Energy
- Transport
- Water
- Postal services
- Environment
- Public service media
- Telecommunications

Owned, managed and “made in” Europe, SGIs provide for the **performance of the EU economy and the well-being of people in the EU**. They are natural actors to reinforce the **EU's sovereignty and strategic autonomy** while supporting the **EU's democracy and values**.

Facing the emergence of new policy priorities in Europe, including improving its resilience, its security of supply for strategic resources and accelerating the twin transition, **SGIs must be recognised as a pillar for the future of the EU, and provided with the right framework to flourish**.

In the past five years, SGI Europe has been on the frontline of the EU development, focusing its activities on the roll-out of a fair EU Green Deal, the development of an EU social policy respecting the principle of subsidiarity and the role of social partners, the implementation of the EU social partners' work programmes, as well as the expansion of the “foresight capacity” to better anticipate crises and the growth of the EU Open Strategic Autonomy.

Building upon those achievements, SGI Europe has **established its strategic priorities for the EU legislative term 2024-2029**. Considering SGIs' essentiality to our social, environmental and economic well-being, we **call on all European parties and candidates to address those issues and preserve the unique role of SGIs in the EU social and economic model**.

Ahead of the EU elections and the start of a new legislative term, SGI Europe calls to:

- Meet the investment challenge to support the EU Open Strategic Autonomy
- Improve the Single Market and the EU Industrial Policy
- Set up EU Public Goods
- Create the conditions for reviving the EU Social Dialogue
- Anticipate SGIs in times of scarcity
- Develop skills to address labour shortages
- Ensure a “human-centric” approach to AI which leaves no-one behind
- Level the playing field between public and private undertakings

To achieve those priorities, SGI Europe highlights the need for appropriate institutional recognitions through:

- **The appointment of a European Commission Vice-President for SGIs and proposing an SGIs Action Plan**
- **The setting-up of an Intergroup of the European Parliament dedicated to SGIs**

Priorities for 2024-2029

Meet the investment challenge to support the EU Open Strategic Autonomy

Providers of **SGIs are known for their significant investment plans**. In the face of the **green and digital transition**, and with increasing threats to our crucial infrastructures, the **investment needs of SGIs are at an all-time high**. The scale of the investment challenge will call for difficult arbitration, and, considering their essentiality to both the EU economy and EU citizens, we call on putting SGIs and public services on top of the agenda.

Carrying out these investments represents an industrial challenge and raises questions about the ability of European suppliers to meet the needs. The EU legislative framework must evolve to further encourage suppliers to develop production capacities within the EU while supporting SGI providers in “buying European”. The **EU's Open Strategic Autonomy and sovereignty will greatly depend on our ability to procure essential services and critical infrastructures from European industrial actors**.

Improve the Single Market and the EU Industrial Policy

SGIs are core elements of the EU social market economy. **Accessible, high-quality and affordable SGIs are instrumental to the lives of citizens and enterprises**. As economic actors supporting the EU autonomy through their responsibility as providers of services, as managers of critical infrastructures and as public buyers of goods and services, enterprises of SGIs are enabling the growth of the EU economy.

SGI Europe calls for acknowledging providers of **services of general interest as drivers for innovation and the uptake of new products and services**. In line with the provisions of the Treaties and the principle of subsidiarity, the **financing, management and organisation of SGIs is a core element of the local, regional and national authorities**. However, SGI Europe also supports the exchange of best practices amongst its members and supports convergence in the provision of affordable, accessible and high-quality SGIs.

To prevent administrative burden on SGIs (which remains a significant factor hampering their growth and development), SGI Europe stands ready to support the European Commission in **developing “SGI-oriented Impact Assessments”, to be integrated into the Better Regulation toolbox**.

Set up EU Public Goods

Complementing the improvement of the Single Market, **EU institutions should consider EU Public Goods in strategic areas and improve the Single Market to preserve the EU's edge on critical and emerging technologies relevant to green and digital transitions**.

This could be done in sectors such as **energy** (through a genuine Energy Union, starting with guaranteeing the security of supply and energy security as a whole), **healthcare** (especially on pandemic preparedness and healthcare scientific research), or **security** (including of our critical and strategic infrastructures, including water and public transport).

Create the conditions for reviving Social Dialogue

Social dialogue is a core component of the EU social and economic model. The role of social partners – employers and trade unions – and social dialogue must be put at the heart of the ongoing initiatives to **deliver the European social model for enterprises and citizens**.

The **“Summit of Val Duchesse II”**, organised in January 2024, was a significant signal of trust by the EU institutions towards EU social partners and is a daunting call to responsibility to deliver on our potential. The process engaged on this occasion must lead to a new start for the EU social dialogue.

SGI Europe calls for **involving social partners in initiatives with direct or indirect impacts on the labour market in the face of the transformations stemming from the green, digital and demographic transitions**. We also call on EU institutions to explicitly recognise the role played by SGIs – as providers of essential services – in the EU social and economic model.

Anticipate SGIs in times of scarcity

The pandemic and the demographic transition which have exacerbated existing strains on the care system, the war in Ukraine and its impact on energy markets, and the water crisis in southern Europe are new constraints and challenges for SGI providers. While those services and resources were thought to be “infinite”, those events highlighted that **even EU citizens could not be guaranteed continued access to energy, water, healthcare and/or other essential SGI and public services.**

SGIs are crucial to both mitigation and adaptation to extreme events and SGI Europe calls for the **development of the EU capacity to anticipate and prevent future crises** through the reinforcement of our capacity to adapt and a commitment to enhance the “foresight capacity of the EU”.

Develop skills to address labour shortages

The green, digital and demographic transitions are transforming the labour market and work life. While unemployment reaches record lows across the EU, enterprises face labour shortages and a lack of skilled workers to face new, emerging challenges.

In this context of “reindustrialisation”, **improving skills-intelligence and forecasting will be crucial to guarantee the future competitiveness of the EU economy and success on the global stage.** It will also be paramount to address the social dimension of the transitions and ensure the resilience of the EU social and economic model relying on, amongst others, affordable, accessible and high-quality SGIs.

We call on the **EU to further support the Member States: in speeding up the update of education curricula** in line with labour market needs, in better involving employers in **designing education and training** curricula, where needed, and in **supporting work-based education, including effective and good quality apprenticeships,** and in involving social partners at EU and national levels to favour job creation, higher employment participation and better working conditions.

Level the playing field between public and private undertakings

A variety of different actors could be responsible for the delivery of SGIs, from administrative services to public or private undertakings. The **EU primary law** (notably Article 14 and Protocol 26 TFEU) recognises and protects the **national competences regarding the organisation of services of general interest.** SGI Europe calls for guaranteeing the **non-discrimination between private and public undertakings** and ensuring a level-playing field for all enterprises to deliver for the benefit of citizens.

Member states are free to designate SG(E)Is, either through public or private providers. This autonomy should not be curtailed by overburdening the public sector. **Ensuring a level playing field among the different kinds of providers is the essence of fair competition.** For instance, local public services enterprises, which are SMEs providing services of general interest, must now be provided with the appropriate framework to continue ensuring the affordability, quality, and accessibility of services through a **revision of the EU SME Definition.**

Ensure a “human-centric” approach to AI which leaves no one behind

As SGIs continue to increase their uptake of digital tools, it will become increasingly important that no one – citizens, users, workers or companies – is left behind. While supporting their modernisation, this **shift to digital SGIs must not be detrimental to their affordability, accessibility and quality for end-users,** and must be accompanied by **a reflection on the definition of the “universal mandate”, and include access to digital services.**

The uptake of new technologies (such as generative AI) also calls for **developing and promoting a “human-centric” vision of digital technologies** for public and private actors. Such an approach to emerging digital tools should **foster participation** in the digital public space, **increase safety and security, empower individuals,** and **ensure freedom of choice** in the digital environment.

A core pillar of the success of the EU on the global digital stage will focus on the **management of data produced and collected,** which will be essential for developing future technologies relying on machine learning, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things.

SGI Europe calls for a **modernised approach to data governance, putting all private and public actors on equal footing to promote privacy, digital sovereignty, industrial competitiveness, and democracy.**

To ensure that the EU is fit to face upcoming challenges, SGI Europe calls for the following institutional instruments:

A Vice-President of the European Commission for SGIs

Since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, no legislative initiative has been proposed on the basis of Article 14 TFEU. **Building up on the growing EU case-law on services of general interest, SGI Europe calls for taking stock of the implementation of Article 14 and Protocol 26 TFEU.**

To that aim, and considering that services of general interest are impacting citizens and enterprises in many different ways, SGI Europe recommends the appointment of a **European Commission Vice-President in charge of SGIs.**

Building up on the existing CJEU case-law on SGIs, such portfolio would allow for the **preparation of an Action Plan on SGIs,** including improved coordination in the **implementation of the EU acquis** on SGIs, their **contribution to the EU Open Strategic Autonomy** and ensuring the **fairness of the twin transition.**

An Intergroup of the European Parliament on SGIs

Establishing an intergroup in the European Parliament dedicated to SGIs would offer a timely and valuable platform where relevant MEPs, stakeholders and experts could gather and exchange evidence-based information, expertise, and best practices.

Its objective would be to **inform and steer the policy debate around the importance of SGIs** as enablers and direct contributors to the EU economy, Single market and citizens. In addition, the group would also complement and support existing institutional platforms and fora with relevant content and information.

Amongst others, the **policy priorities** of an Intergroup on SGIs could focus on:

- **Labour and skills mismatches in SGIs**
- **Financing and investments**
- **Digitalisation and AI**



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