



*Employers entrusted to deliver
Sustainability Growth Innovation*

Policy Kit

with regard to the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU

1 January 2023 – 30 June 2023

SIG Europe represents employers and enterprises of services of general interest since 1961. Our members are organisations and enterprises active in fields such as:

- Central & local administrations,
- Healthcare,
- Social services,
- Education,
- Housing,
- Waste management,
- Energy,
- Transport,
- Water,
- Environment,
- Communications.

Modern public services and services of general interest (SGIs) support the fundamental goals of the EU, enabling business, cohesion, economic and social solidarity, and a better quality of life for citizens.

This Policy Kit, prepared considering the programme of the Swedish presidency of the EU, aims to present key SIG Europe positions on the main files to be discussed at the EU level over the next six months.

Transversal Priorities

- The path to **climate neutrality, the continued progress towards more digitalisation and the global race to consolidate clean-tech leadership** are vital elements shaping the future of the EU industries. SIG Europe, and its members providing essential services of general interest to citizens and enterprises, have a central role to play in the deployment of cleantech across Europe, especially in shaping an **appropriate regulatory environment, boosting investment and developing the right skillsets fitting future needs**.
- SIG Europe welcomes the European Commission's Green Deal Industrial plan, which aims at **accompanying the EU Green Deal with an enabling industrial strategy**. The Green Deal must remain the EU growth strategy for a genuine green transition across the EU.
- A **flexible and agile state aid framework is necessary to react to changing circumstances while preventing a subsidy race and distorting the Single Market**. The approach should be well-targeted and time-limited, with simple measures such as increasing thresholds for aid automatically deemed as compatible under the General Block Exemption Regulation.
- **Public procurement has a unique potential to contribute to the green transition**: creating a more predictable environment for public buyers by defining clear sustainability criteria and EU standards will contribute to a more coherent and holistic regulatory framework. It will allow **moving away from the current piecemeal approach based on green and social clauses in sectoral legislations**.
- Addressing skills shortages must be a priority. In our project "Green Skills in VET", SIG Europe highlighted the need for improved synergies between SIG employers and education providers to boost skills intelligence and anticipate future needs. **A strategy of economic growth and social inclusion (including environmental sustainability policies) must go hand-in-hand with a training strategy to achieve the objectives of the EU Green Deal**.
- A **technology-neutral approach, considering** the maturity of all technologies and including transitional activities (such as nuclear and natural gases), **should guide our approach** by contributing to the security of supply while enabling the energy transition.

More: [The EU Green Deal must drive the EU industrial strategy, says SIG Europe](#)

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General Affairs

Conference on the Future of Europe

- With the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), the **EU has completed a historical exercise of participatory democracy**. Bringing together institutions, citizens, social partners and civil society, it provided feedback on our joint actions. And should lead to improving our common project.
- In the context of the CoFoE, the exchanges provided a **reality check on the citizens' demands and expectations**. In particular, the transversal calls to boost public and private investments in infrastructure and **SGIs stand out as the critical linking feature throughout the final report of the CoFoE**. From health to climate, education, the economy, or the reinforcement of Europe's geopolitical standing, security and democratic values, ambition and investments will be needed to deliver.
- The CoFoE was made possible thanks to the political will of the EU institutions. Its success was made possible by the **cooperation between EU, national, regional and local Institutions, citizens, social partners and civil society organisations**. Those who actively contributed and engaged in an innovative and healthy bottom-up democratic, participatory exercise contributed to its ambitious conclusions.
- We all invested capital, time and resources to fulfil the CoFoE's promise. We now **count on national and EU institutions to listen to the citizens' demands and translate them into concrete initiatives**. Only by acting together and providing collective answers to vital common challenges can we secure a bright future for Europe and its citizens. **SGI Europe will contribute with the EU institutions and all the other actors involved to transform those recommendations into reality**.

More: [\[Op-ed\] EU institutions now need to deliver on the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe](#)

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Economic and Financial Affairs

Review of the EU Economic Governance

- On 24 December 2021, SGI Europe submitted its contribution to the public consultation on the review of the EU economic governance. In its paper, SGI Europe calls for **meaningful and sound reforms adapting our economic governance and tools to the new post-pandemic reality**. The new framework should be informed by the lessons from the pandemic: existing rules are not fit-for-purpose and **fiscal policy has a crucial role in economic policy-making** and growth-oriented policy choices.
- SGI Europe also advocates urgently adapting to the post-pandemic economic reality: current high debt levels and low-interest rates should lead to a **new approach to reconcile the objectives of debt reduction and fiscal consolidation whilst fostering the investments** needed for the twin transition. The aim should be to design a better functioning fiscal and regulatory framework and simplify the rules, evolve from a one-size-fits-all to a more targeted approach, find a balance between investments and sustainability of public finances, and reform its governance in line with the best practices of the RRF.
- SGI Europe believes that the EU now faces a **window of opportunity for establishing a new ambitious pact** to concretely invest in the future of Europeans and reinforce social cohesion. With adequate resources and a functioning economic governance framework, this new pact should prevent further divergence and lay the ground for a relaunch of the EU project on solid and long-lasting foundations.
- Despite prolonging the general escape clause, 2023 must be the year to agree on new fiscal rules. This objective should ensure certainty to Member States, enterprises and stakeholders on their plans and projects linked to the twin transition.

More: [Response to the consultation on the review of the EU economic governance](#)

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Recovery and Resilience Facility

- The Swedish Presidency comes at a crucial moment for the EU recovery. With significant uncertainties about the impacts of the war in Ukraine, **facilitating the continuation of the disbursements of funds related to the implementation of the national recovery and resilience plans (NRRPs) stands as one of the most critical priorities** of the Swedish Presidency.

- In light of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, SGI Europe highlights the need to strengthen **the EU's resilience, recovery, and strategic autonomy**.
- Against this backdrop, SGI Europe believes the pandemic has highlighted that the provision of SGIs is of paramount importance to the well-being of citizens and the overall economic resilience of the EU.
- In the post-pandemic recovery, ensuring access to high-quality SGIs to every person, family, and enterprise, particularly across deprived regions and communities, should prevent pre-existing inequalities from widening.
- To prevent potentially uncoordinated and unsynchronised management of economic policies between the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and the European Semester, SGI Europe calls for a **thorough assessment of the overall economic governance, which should consider both new criteria and parameters as well as greater involvement of the social partners**.

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EU Taxonomy and sustainable reporting

- SGI Europe supports **setting the proper framework to redirect capital flows towards sustainable economic activities**. A sustainable finance mechanism and the Taxonomy Regulation can enable the objectives of the EU Green Deal. This framework should be guided by shared principles that safeguard similar levels of ambition across various sectors, aim for a technology-neutral approach, and respect public undertakings' role. The taxonomy needs to consider the current national and EU legislation fully. It should **simplify the process and make sustainable and resilient projects more attractive**.
- Enterprises and investors may lose interest if the information burden is too high and opt for traditional funding requiring less disclosure. The **design of the EU Taxonomy should not undermine investments in sustainable and resilient projects and promote harmonisation with other sustainable investment instruments**.
- Due to its high complexity and implementation timeline, a **gradual implementation of the Taxonomy would bring about a considerable increase in market implementation** and acceptance and reorient private funds more quickly to sustainable economic activities.
- It will be essential that the EU Taxonomy framework is guided by shared principles that safeguard similar **ambition across various sectors and aims for a technology-neutral approach**. It will also be crucial to ensure that the EU Taxonomy considers the maturity of the technologies and their contribution to reducing CO2 emissions and adding to the circular economy principle.

More: [Position Paper on the Preliminary recommendations for Technical Screening Criteria for the EU taxonomy](#), [Position on a complementary delegated act to the EU taxonomy on nuclear and natural gas](#)

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Justice and Home Affairs

Migration

- Since 2017, the European Commission and the EU Social and Economic Partners (including SGI Europe) have been part of the **European Partnership for Integration**. The Partnership underlines the importance of a **multilevel, cross-sectoral approach for ensuring access to essential services such as housing, education and healthcare and facilitating an early integration into the labour market**.
- On 19 December 2022, the **European Commission and European Social and Economic Partners** (SGI Europe, BusinessEurope, SMEunited, ETUC and Eurochambres) **renewed their commitment to integrating refugees and other migrants into the EU labour market**. In a joint statement, the European Commission and the Social and Economic Partners reaffirmed the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to facilitate the integration into the labour market.
- The **Skills and Talent package within the Pact on Migration and Asylum should help address labour shortages and skills mismatches** and push for a solid and systemic selection policy to advance a sound common European migration and asylum policy. With the Talent Pool and the Talent Partnership, the

European Commission is **laying the ground for a standard vocational and educational training dimension to migration**, including for care and other essential workers.

- The success and reach of the Talent Pool will depend on the **deployment of adequate resources to make the tool accessible and operational**. Setting up networks on the ground to support its implementation with social partners and in line with the Partnership for Integration will support the Talent Pool's deployment, help connect the relevant actors, and make it work.
- **SGI Europe closely works with a large variety of actors at the local and national level**, promoting a multi-stakeholder approach to provide affordable and accessible public services such as education, healthcare and housing, whose crucial role in promoting migrants' social inclusion is emphasised in the New Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027.

More: [SGI Europe: joint statement of the European Commission and the EU Social and Economic Partners on supporting the labour market integration of refugees](#)

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Employment, Social Policy, Healthcare and Consumer Affairs

Employment and social policy

Proposal for a Directive on pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms

- SGI Europe acknowledges the **importance of equal pay and the role that pay transparency plays in its implementation**. However, to tackle the gender pay gap, one must look further than the wage setting.
- The **extensive and far-reaching obligations** for employers set in the Commission proposal for a directive on pay transparency are **likely to create a considerable administrative and financial burden**. The proposal also makes it extremely **difficult for enterprises to anticipate its impact** on their activities and know how and when they have fulfilled their obligations according to the directive.
- SGI Europe is concerned that these **unclearities and the detailed requirements will affect national labour market models and the capacity and autonomy of national social partners to maintain, negotiate, conclude, and enforce collective agreements following their respective traditions**. Collective agreements with gender-neutral wage-setting criteria are easily accessible in many Member States and monitored by the social partners negotiating, revising, and updating them.
- Social partners are responsible for determining the criteria for wage-setting via collective agreements, including ensuring that they are based on the principle of equal pay and gender-neutral. The **directive will have to include sufficient flexibility and respect for the Member States' traditions and the autonomy and responsibility of social partners at the national, sectoral and local levels**.

More: [Opinion on Pay Transparency](#)

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Strengthening Social Dialogue

- The proposed Council recommendation on social dialogue should **provide tools for implementing the 2016 quadripartite statement on a new Start for Social Dialogue** and its related Council conclusions. It must become the **new pillar of the EU's future endeavours to reinforce social dialogue in all Member States**. It is crucial to recognise the diversity of collective bargaining systems across the EU.
- The Council recommendation should also fully **recognise the role of trade unions and employer organisations in negotiating balanced collective agreements autonomously and without interference**. Strong and balanced social dialogue systems have improved working conditions and competitiveness and created social peace, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 period.
- The Council recommendation should **emphasise that social and civil dialogue cannot be confused**. Social partners are representative organisations which are mandated by their constituents. This difference should be enshrined in the Council recommendation to prevent situations where this confusion is used to drown the voice of social partners.
- The recommendation should encourage **Member States to entrust social partners with the implementation of EU social legislation through collective agreements**, given that the overall

protection level remains. It should also lead to promoting collaboration with the EU social partners to implement social partners' agreements better and provide appropriate support to do so.

- This should ensure a **better understanding by national governments of the space needed by national social partners**, including from a legislative point of view, to implement EU agreements and respond to new labour market issues.

More: [Social Dialogue package: A new impetus for collective bargaining at the EU and national level](#)

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Proposal for a Directive on improving working conditions in platform work

- In our two-stage social partner's consultation, **SGI Europe called to refrain from proposing any "platform work" definition. It affirmed its strong preference for non-legislative instruments**, which could include, for example, "monitoring in the framework of the European Semester, guidance for ensuring fair platform work or reinforced mutual learning between Member States." SGI Europe also stated that better working conditions for platform work could be achieved through a combination of measures, such as better support and strengthening of collective organisation and bargaining power of platform workers regardless of their employment status.
- SGI Europe expressed that **"platform work" covers many different realities and that no uniform labour market can be called "platform work"**. Several Member States have been granting additional layers of protection to specific categories of self-employed. This diversity stands against a one-size-fits-all approach at the EU level through a binding legal instrument. Furthermore, specific issues related to platform work, such as algorithmic management and data protection, are already dealt with.
- Considering the new proposal for a directive, **it will now be crucial for the interinstitutional negotiations that the definition of the status of people that perform work through digital platforms – and whether they are to be seen as employees or self-employed – remains at the national level** in the hands of Member States, national social partners, or national courts.

More: [Response to the second stage consultation on a possible action addressing the challenges related to working conditions in platform work](#)

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Competitiveness

Internal Market and Industry

30th anniversary of Single Market

- SGI Europe welcomes the activities of the Swedish presidency to celebrate the **30th anniversary of the Single Market**, as well as the resolution of the European Parliament. It is a unique opportunity to **celebrate its achievements while looking towards future developments, including recognising the special role of services of general interest and public services**.
- Services of general interest and public services are an example where the market alone is insufficient. **SGIs provide the basis for economic activities** – whether it be the transport network, the education system, childcare, schools, health care or public administration – **by investing in public infrastructure**. Therefore, all these investments need to be financed on a solid basis.
- **SG(E)Is generate benefits to society at large, which justifies their compensation by taxing competing companies that use skimming strategies**. A market-oriented approach is unsuitable for the EU, which was built on solidarity and had an innovative social model.
- However, taking into account societal transformations and the changes in competition policy and the internal market, the special and protected function of services of general interest is not always sufficiently considered. **SGI Europe thus calls for further recognition of SGIs in safeguarding state resources and their role in twin, digital and green transition**.

More: [Opinion on "Rethinking the Acquis Communautaire of Services of General Interest"](#)

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Industrial Strategy and the SME definition

- The current definition of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) under EU law is based on the Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC, which has subsequently been embedded in EU binding law by being included in the Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014. Under this legal framework, **SMEs mainly or entirely owned by public authorities do not fall under the EU definition of an SME**. This non-recognition negatively impacts their access to financing opportunities by limiting the scope of funding and financial programmes available to them and their right to benefit from administrative simplification measures, leading to distorted conditions of competition for public SMEs.
- SGI Europe considers that private and public enterprises equally small in size are not accorded equal treatment. This definition contradicts the principles of the TFEU by creating discrimination between enterprises based on ownership criteria.
- This situation mainly affects Local Public Services Enterprises (LPSEs) by restricting their ability to fulfil their mission of general interest as providers. **Given their strategic role in the EU territories, these public enterprises must be supported.**

More: [Opinion "Rethinking the SME Definition"](#)

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Transport, Telecommunications and Energy

Transport

Proposal for a Directive on Deployment of Alternative Fuels Infrastructure

- **SGI Europe welcomes the principles of the proposed revision of the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR)**. Especially for the mobility sector, we welcome the European Commission's requests to Member States to consider charging stations for public transport operators when drafting the national plans (Art. 13) and that the definition of alternative fuels remains almost unchanged (Art. 2(3)).
- **Smart, intelligent charging is essential for a successful roll-out of e-mobility** and is actively supported by SGI Europe. As much as we agree with the Commission on Art. 5 paragraphs 7 and 8 to ensure that all publicly accessible recharging points are digitally connected and capable of smart charging, we strongly **call for reasonable transitional periods for Member States to ensure a fair roll-out**.
- SGI Europe urges the co-legislators to **clarify the request to display the ad-hoc price, including all its components at charging stations**. We recommend avoiding the physically installed display of information on the recharging infrastructure but having this information displayed on an external device.
- SGI Europe calls for **more clarity under the new definition of "public accessibility"**. SGI Europe generally welcomes the introduction of an EU-wide uniform definition. However, we are critical of the current proposal. With this definition, semi-public charging/refuelling facilities (e.g. in supermarket parking lots or underground garages, housing sector) would fall under this definition, creating high and burdensome administrative costs, especially in the housing sector.

More: [Position on the revision of the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation \(AFIR\)](#)

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Telecommunications

Connectivity Infrastructure Act

- **Broadband connectivity is an essential service that must be provided at high-quality for all at an affordable price**. SGI Europe advocates for the **financially sustainable development of electronic Communication Networks through prioritising Gigabit fixed Networks**, prioritising the ambition to avoid premature dismantling of outdated infrastructure.
- The Connectivity Infrastructure Act must build upon the **2014 Broadband Cost Reduction Directive (BCDR)**, which aims at facilitating and incentivising the roll-out of high-speed electronic communications networks. It will **lawfully enforce the guidelines outlined in the 2020 Connectivity Toolbox** to help

countries speed up the fibre and 5G deployment. **SGI Europe supports those crucial objectives for ensuring the successful digital transformation of the EU.**

- **Particular care must be put into improving the exchange of information and data concerning critical infrastructure.** The joint use of existing infrastructure for broadband, water and gas could limit the costs and the negative impact of the deployment of broadband networks on the environment. The BCDR already obliges network operators to provide a minimum set of information on existing physical infrastructure, allowing Member States to require public sector bodies to make available information about physical network infrastructure and for telecommunication operators to exchange information with other network operators (utilities, transport networks). However, **while the Member States have implemented these requirements, there still is room for improvement.**

More: [SGI Europe response to the Guidelines on state aid for broadband networks](#)

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Energy

The RED, EED and EPBD

- **Energy efficiency alone will not be sufficient to meet the targets set in the EU Green Deal:** energy efficiency will play a significant role in decarbonising the economy only if the European Commission adopts a climate-centric approach leading to a higher reduction of fossil fuel consumption.
- The Energy Efficiency First principle (EE1 principle) can be a helpful guideline across many sectors whilst being subordinated to decarbonising and reducing climate impacts. It can also be costly without prioritising the most critical actions for the climate. The **RED, EED and EPBD revisions should focus on a "climate-efficiency centric approach"**, with the need to reduce emissions and energy consumption, with more ambitious targets on carbon than on energy efficiency.
- SGI Europe calls for avoiding unnecessary "double legislation" with the EU energy and climate legislation. In evaluating future policies, the reviews should be done systematically with a dual focus on cost-effectiveness and carbon efficiency across all EU policies in all sectors. **A coherent policy between the EED, the RED, the EPBD and the ETS will enable a switch towards low-carbon energies and open a natural and economically efficient way to deploy renewables.**
- Given the ambition **to achieve a net-zero target for the EU by 2050, renewable and low-carbon gases will be necessary.** As the goal should remain decarbonisation, a GHG indicator calculated along the value chain is the best indicator, promoting all types of renewable and low-carbon energies. Waste heat, energy from waste and residual materials are climate-friendly and GHG-neutral, equated with renewables. Member States should also be free to opt for the best options in this regard.

More: [Input to the Renewable Energy Directive II \(REDII\)](#), [Input to the Energy Efficiency Directive \(EED\)](#) and [Input to the Revision of the Energy Performance in Buildings Directive](#)

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Gas Package

- The SGI Europe position on the revision of the EU Gas market rules welcomed the European Commission's proposal of a new Directive on common rules for the internal markets in renewable and natural gases and hydrogen. SGI Europe supports the development of a sustainable gas sector and a low-carbon and renewable electricity market that will be key to reaching the climate neutrality targets.
- SGI Europe fully supports the creation of a common regulatory framework for gas and hydrogen and a better integration between electricity and gas. Making this vision a reality will require an **all-inclusive approach where all types of low-carbon and renewable energy sources are treated on a level-playing field and considers the strategic role of the existing gas infrastructure.** Low carbon and renewable gases will also play a key role in parallel to electrification.
- SGI Europe deems it vital to make stronger connections between the electricity and the gas sector and other sectors such as heating, transport and industries. In regards to the further development of a sustainable and efficient gas sector, innovative technologies such as Power-to-Gas (P2G) will be the link

to connect better the sectors together and making better use of decarbonised and renewable hydrogen via electrolysis will be playing a role in the future too.

More: [Position on the revision of the EU Gas market rules](#)

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Environment

Zero Pollution Action Plan

- **SGI Europe welcomes the European Commission's initiative on a Zero Pollution action plan and its objectives to prevent, remedy, monitor and report on pollution.** SGI Europe particularly welcomes the aim to tackle the pollution on the water, soil and air scale in a holistic approach to avoid and reduce pollution at the source, taking into account the **precautionary and polluter pays principles**.
- **A prerequisite for systematic protection of the environment and water resources is the coherence of EU legal acts** such as the **Sustainable Use of Plant Protection Products**. To strengthen the good status of the environment, especially water and soil, measures in other sectors must also be geared towards the corresponding environmental protection goals. **SGI Europe stresses the planned interlinking of the different EU environmental policy fields.**
- Overall, SGI Europe asks that all existing and future EU Green Deal initiatives that contribute to the zero emissions target must be measured against the target of **reduction at the source first**. This means taking into account the challenges of climate change, air and soil pollution, micropollutants, pharmaceuticals, persistent substances (such as PFAS) and other emerging pollutants by reducing pollution at source and consequently implementing **the precautionary and polluter pays principle** and ensuring it becomes part of the solution to reach the set goals of the EU Green Deal.
- Pollution measures have to go in hand with the full implementation of the polluter pays principle. The introduction of **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes** should be used to implement this principle. Such schemes have already been introduced in other Union legislation, such as the Single Plastics Use Directive (EU) 2019/904).

More: [Position on the Zero Pollution Action Plan](#)

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Fit for 55

- SGIs are committed to **supporting the EU transition to a carbon-neutral model**. This transition must **balance the social, environmental, and economic dimensions**. The EU runs on SGIs, including local public services enterprises and semi-public SMEs, which are vital elements of our socio-economic model.
- Employers and providers of SGIs need the proper framework to **ensure the transition is just for workers and citizens**. The transitional pathways must offer workers quality jobs and provide financing incentives for citizens to renovate their homes and buy carbon-free. To that aim, we **welcome the proposed Social Climate Fund with a particular emphasis on alleviating social impacts** on the most vulnerable groups by offering new investment solutions to those affected by carbon pricing policies.
- **Coherence and a level playing field for all technologies must be ensured**, with legal certainty, clarity, and consistency at the heart of the climate-neutrality path for 2050.
- SGI Europe notes the proposed extension of the ETS to transport and buildings, which should support setting efficient carbon pricing and send an economic signal to market actors to allow decarbonisation. The extended ETS should provide a fair carbon price in the sectors covered and create a level-playing field for all technologies to incentivise investments that foster decarbonisation.

More: [Comments on the Fit for 55 Package](#), [Position Paper on the revision of the EU Emission Trading System \(ETS\)](#)

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Resilience and adaptation to climate change

- SGI Europe **fully supports the ambition of the EU Green Deal of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050**. Together with its members, SGI Europe is committed to developing a balanced and sustainable strategy relying on economic, social and environmental development. Considering these three dimensions for the Green Deal to reach its objectives will be essential.
- **The first environmental damages are already there, and measures for an adaptation strategy are needed**: SGI Europe calls for further actions in other areas of climate protection, such as enhancing biodiversity, limiting local air pollution, ensuring quality water supply and land use, and including them in the process to reduce our emissions and environmental impacts.
- Maintaining communication systems, ensuring energy and water production and distribution, and maintaining buildings and transport networks are increasingly complex and costly. **Infrastructure resilience is an important issue, and SGIs are at the forefront of building and protecting them**.
- With their long-standing experience and proximity to citizens and communities, SGIs have a central role in facing climate challenges. However, these challenges correspond to massive investments linked to satisfying needs.

More: [Opinion on the EU Green Deal](#)

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Circular Economy

- The EU approach to circular economy should focus **on waste prevention** and supporting Member States that risk failing recycling and waste prevention obligations. To enhance proper waste prevention, producers need to implement sustainability principles in product design.
- **Supply and demand for secondary raw materials are essential for developing a circular economy** and should be strengthened. To this aim, legislative and economic measures must be applied to support the development of a solid market for secondary raw materials. An effective development system for end-of-waste criteria at the EU level should be considered, along with new requirements for recycled content for proper product categories.
- More support for **recycling methods in building infrastructures and adequate binding targets is needed**, such as fostering large-scale European experimentation in low-carbon construction and refurbishment systems that comply with recycling principles.
- **Waste-to-energy must be part of a sustainable circular economy** to implement the landfill ban, sink hazardous substances as a renewable energy resource, and recover secondary raw materials.
- **The enforcement of the waste hierarchy in every Member State must be prioritised** to reach the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. For the waste sector, the aim must be to end landfilling of untreated municipal waste already by 2030.

More: [Opinion on the Circular economy action plan](#)

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Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

Education

Skills and Education

- Employee training is mainly the responsibility of social partners. When organising employee training, national **social partners need to consider the realities of the labour markets and the needs of workers**, including changes in tasks and jobs, innovation, mobility and transitions into and between jobs.
- **Fostering a lifelong learning culture in workplaces is essential to help workers to develop their careers and to improve their employment opportunities**. Improving the number of adults participating in training at all skill levels is essential in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights to get a higher-skilled workforce adapted to rapidly evolving labour market needs and to increase productivity and innovation.

- **The EU social partners reiterate that a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate.** Many tools are used, for example, paid educational training leaves (by law or through collective agreements), personal training accounts or training funds (cross-industry or sectoral), vouchers, etc., which all have specific objectives and target groups. A key challenge is to make these tools interoperable.
- **Digitalisation and greening mean that occupational profiles must be adapted and that workers must acquire and utilise new skills.** The European social partners' Autonomous Framework Agreement on Digitalisation outlines measures to be considered by national social partners, such as internal and external validation solutions and the financing of training by employers when a worker is requested to undertake job-related training linked to digitalisation.

More: [Employers' input to an ACVT opinion on a future EU initiative aiming to improve/boost training provision across Europe](#)

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Green Skills in VET (2021-2023)

- The “Green Skills in VET” project, co-funded by the European Commission, and implemented by SGI Europe and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), focused on the **needs of SGI providers operating in the water, energy, and transport sector in selected countries** (Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal). In the context of this project, the research also investigated the **possible cooperation between vocational education and training (VET) institutions and SGI enterprises.**
- As highlighted in a recent forecast analysis by the CEDEFOP, the **EU Green Deal will lead to an increase of employment equal to 63,2% in the water sector, 17,2% in the energy sector, and 0,4% in the transport sector**, highlighting a wide range of impacts of the transition to the sectors. The water, energy and transport sectors face very different challenges with the EU Green Deal targets.
- A **strategy of economic growth and social inclusion** (including environmental sustainability policies) **through training for skills development is necessary to achieve the objectives of the EU Green Deal.** The importance of such an approach has been acknowledged in several recent European policy proposals related to VET, such as the Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social equity and resilience, and the European Skills Agenda, which recognise the centrality of vocational training for the green transition.

More: [Final reports of the project “Green Skills in VET.”](#)

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