

SERP: A European project serving those who care for patients

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In hospitals, health centres and care homes across Europe, thousands of health workers care for our lives every day. They do so with dedication, vocation and resilience, even in the most difficult moments. But who cares for them? Who protects them when healthcare systems and their workplaces are restructured, privatised or transformed without listening to their voices?

The European SERP (Socially and Environmentally Responsible Restructuring in the Public Healthcare Sector) project was created precisely to answer this question. Its objective is clear: to strengthen the role of trade union representatives in the healthcare sector across Europe so that they can actively participate — using effective tools — in managing changes affecting employment, working conditions and public health services.

SERP is not just a technical project. It is primarily a political and social choice in favour of a fairer, more humane and more democratic model of transformation. A model in which healthcare workers have a voice and a real opportunity to influence — not only at the end of the process, but from the very beginning.

A strategy created with people and for people

Although the project is still ongoing and its final products — such as the Strategy and Action Plan — are still being developed, key steps are already being taken. The article you are reading is a preview of the ongoing work, a glimpse into the heart of a collective process that promises to set a new standard in the approach to restructuring healthcare systems in Europe.

SERP strategy will be developed after a face-to-face workshop planned for December 2025, during which trade union representatives, experts and sector employees will share their experiences, challenges and solutions related to restructuring processes and their effects. It will be a bottom-up strategy, based on diverse realities but linked by the same idea: **that changes in public healthcare cannot take place behind the backs of employees.**

It will not be merely a technical document, **but a roadmap that will strengthen trade union capacity, support social dialogue and promote restructuring processes that respect workers' rights, professional dignity and the public interest.**

Action Plan to move from words to deeds.

In parallel with the strategy, the project also provides for an **Action Plan**, which will be integrated into the Practical Change Management Handbook, planned for August 2026. This plan will contain specific proposals, methodologies, training resources and useful tools for trade union representatives who are at the forefront of change processes.

Although it is still in the design phase — and will be enriched with insights from an online workshop in April 2026 — the Action Plan is based on a strong premise: **Trade unions need practical resources and up-to-date knowledge to operate effectively and proactively.**

Therefore, its key elements include:

- **Training programme** on European and transnational labour law, social dialogue mechanisms and strategies for dealing with restructuring;
- **Practical tools** to negotiate and defend socially responsible restructuring;
- and **strengthening** the competences of trade union representatives in the healthcare sector.

Network for change SERP it is also a network. A network of transnational cooperation between trade unions, European institutions and experts, aimed at sharing good practices, generating common experiences and developing a common approach to a challenge that affects all countries: the profound transformation of their healthcare systems. Every closure of a ward, every outsourcing or reform introduced without the involvement of employees is a missed opportunity for a fair and sustainable improvement of the system. **The SERP project aims to reverse this logic by providing trade union representatives with the tools they need to anticipate, negotiate and propose realistic alternatives that protect jobs, quality of care and the public interest.**

A message of recognition and reinforcement

Beyond technical objectives, SERP sends a clear message to healthcare workers:

Your work is essential, and your voice matters.

The project highlights the enormous pressure that healthcare workers have been — and continue to be — under, especially in the wake of the pandemic. However, it does not stop at diagnosis. It proposes solutions. And it does so together with those who know the reality best: **the employees themselves and their representatives.**

Through training, tools, spaces for dialogue and collective bargaining, SERP focuses on proactive trade union action, **able to lead change processes, rather than merely resisting them.**

Looking ahead

Although the Strategy and Action Plan are still being defined, this article is intended as an invitation to participate, contribute ideas and get involved in the process. The transformation of the healthcare sector is a fact, but it can be carried out in a fair, socially responsible manner that respects workers' rights. For this to happen, the active participation of trade union representatives will be crucial. SERP is here to support them on this journey.

Because caring for those who care for us is also our shared responsibility.

It is also a fairer healthcare system, which starts with stronger, better informed and more listened to employees.

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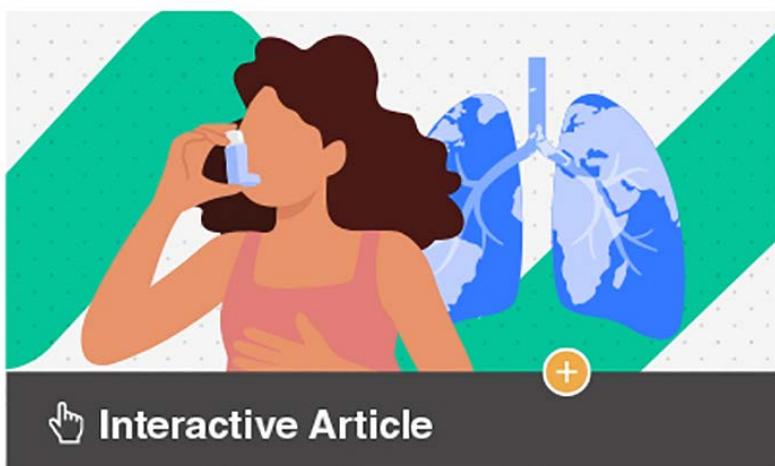
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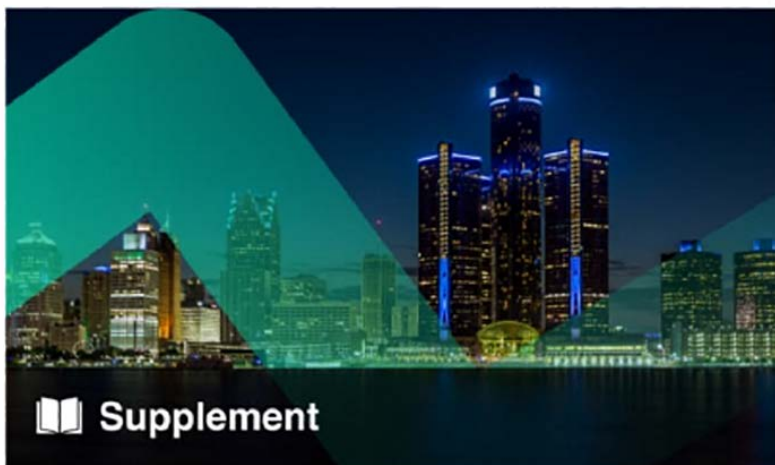


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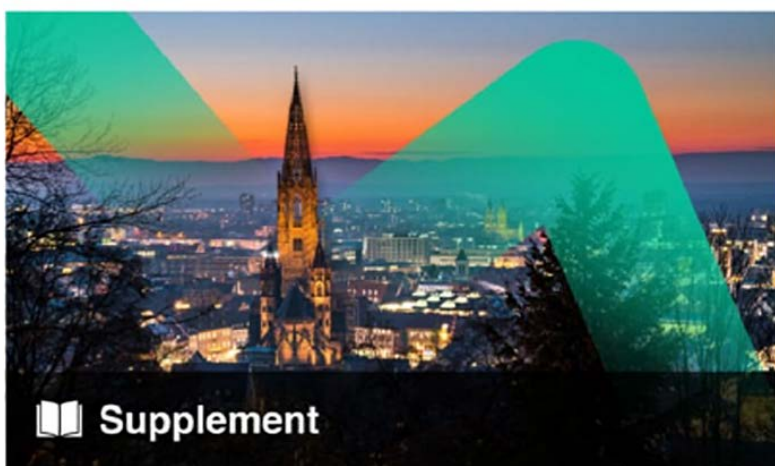


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