

# Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs)

## 2016-2017

The European Semester (ES) is a multi-annual exchange/discussion between the European Commission and Member States with the goal to achieve the EU's targets, both in terms of the Europe 2020 Strategy and of the Stability and Growth Pact.

Each year, the European Commission (EC) analyses in detail EU Member States' economic and structural reform programmes and provides the Member States' with a set of recommendations for the following 12-18 months. During this time, EU Member States (MSs) have to align their budgetary and economic policies with the objectives and rules agreed at EU level, within the targets previously mentioned.

Although the ES is primarily about macro-economic policy, often time is also touches upon subjects and policies which affect both persons with disabilities and social service provision.

The three most important documents guiding the European Semester are the

- [Annual Growth Survey](#), presenting the European Commission's overall approach in the European Semester (November each year)
- [Country Reports](#), presenting detailed assessments by the European Commission of the economy and policy of/in each Member State (February each year)
- [Country Specific Recommendations](#), presenting recommendations from the European Commission to each Member State, officially based on the Country Reports. (May/June each year).

The [National Reform Programmes](#) are also important as they describe the response from each Member State to the Country Specific Recommendations and Country Reports

### Country Specific Recommendations

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In accordance with the ES, each year CSRs are published which outline a set of actions to be taken by each Member State. These CSRs address both economic and social issues facing each individual Member State in the previous year that need to be improved in the coming year. Furthermore, these recommendations represent the Commission's economic and social goals.



Since 2014, the agenda of the Commission’s economic and social goals and thus the CSRs have focused primarily on **increasing investment, implementing structural reforms and ensuring fiscal responsibility**.

This year the CSRs follow a similar line to the previous line: **fiscal responsibility –or in other words, austerity-** is at the very heart of the European Semester process with most, if not all, Member States receiving recommendations in this area; albeit to varying degrees.

Persons with disabilities continue to be largely absent from the CSRs, with a stronger focus on migrants, women, roma, children, the elderly and the long-term unemployed.

Employment policies have a strong focus on activation, often through the prism of “incentivisation” through benefit withdrawal. Of particular interest to EASPD is the strong focus on the link between specialised/individualised support, social services and active labour market policies for many countries.

Regarding education, although the focus is more towards the inclusion of disadvantaged children from migrant or roma background, there are several important references to inclusive education.

In terms of long-term care and healthcare, there is a very strong focus on their sustainability regarding public finances. There are however some interesting recommendations linked to the provision of quality social services, childcare, etc. This is particularly seen via the prism of access to the labour market for women.

There are also references to the improvement of public procurement mechanisms.

Below are a list of countries and their respective CSRs related to the work of EASPD. It is important to read them in context with the preamble of each Country Specific Recommendation, as well as the Country Reports.

Member State	Topic	Content
<b><u>Austria</u></b>	Fiscal	Simplify, rationalise and streamline fiscal relations and responsibilities across the various layers of government
	Gender - Employment	Improve the labour market participation of women
	Education	Take steps to improve the educational achievements of disadvantaged young people
<b><u>Belgium</u></b>	Employment	Ensure the effectiveness of labour market activation policies
	Fiscal	Agree on an enforceable distribution of fiscal targets among all government levels.



<b>Bulgaria</b>	Employment	Reinforce and integrate social services and active labour market policies, in particular for the long-term unemployed and young people not in employment, education or training.
	Education	Increase the provision of quality education for disadvantaged groups, including Roma.
	Health	Improve the efficiency of the health system by improving access and funding, and health outcomes
	Public Procurement	Strengthen the capacity of the Public Procurement Agency and contracting authorities and improve the design and control of public tendering procedures.
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Education	Take measures to increase the inclusion of disadvantaged children, including Roma, in mainstream schools and pre-schools.
	Employment	Remove the obstacles to greater labour market participation by under-represented groups, particularly women.
<b>Estonia</b>	Social Services	Ensure the provision and accessibility of high quality public services, especially social services, at local level, inter alia by adopting and implementing the proposed local government reform.
	Gender	Adopt and implement measures to narrow the gender pay gap, including those foreseen in the Welfare Plan.
<b>Finland</b>	Social Services	Ensure timely adoption and implementation of the administrative reform with a view to better cost-effectiveness of social and healthcare services.
	Employment	Increase incentives to accept work and ensure targeted and sufficient active labour market measures, including for people with a migrant background.
<b>France</b>	Fiscal	Reinforce independent public policy evaluations in order to identify efficiency gains across all sub-sectors of general government.
	Workforce	Ensure that the labour cost reductions are sustained and that minimum wage developments are consistent with job creation and competitiveness. Reform the labour law to provide more incentives for employers to hire on open-ended contracts.
	Education	Improve the links between the education sector and the labour market, in particular by reforming apprenticeship and vocational training, with emphasis on the low-skilled.



<b>Germany</b>	Employment	By the end of 2016, take action to reform the unemployment benefit system in order to bring the system back to budgetary sustainability and to provide more incentives to return to work.
	Fiscal	Achieve a sustained upward trend in public investment, especially in infrastructure, education, research and innovation, by using the available fiscal space and prioritising expenditure. Improve the design of federal fiscal relations, also with a view to addressing the persistent public under-investment, especially at municipal level
	Competition	Step up measures to stimulate competition in the services sector, in particular in business services and regulated professions.
<b>Hungary</b>	Public Procurement	Strengthen transparency and competition in public procurement through e-procurement, increased publication of tenders and further improvement of the anti-corruption framework.
	Employment	Facilitate the transition from the public works scheme to the primary labour market and reinforce other active labour market policies.
	Social welfare	Improve the adequacy and coverage of social assistance and unemployment benefits.
<b>Ireland</b>	Education	Take measures to improve educational outcomes and to increase the participation of disadvantaged groups, in particular Roma, in inclusive mainstream education.
	Fiscal	Enhance the quality of expenditure, particularly by increasing cost-effectiveness of healthcare and by prioritising government capital expenditure in R&D and in public infrastructure, in particular transport, water services and housing.
	Employment	Expand and accelerate the implementation of activation policies to increase the work intensity of households and address the poverty risk of children. Pursue measures to incentivise employment by tapering the withdrawal of benefits and supplementary payments
<b>Italy</b>	Childcare	Improve the provision of quality, affordable full-time childcare.
	Public Services	Implement the reform of the public administration by adopting and implementing all necessary legislative decrees, in particular those reforming local public enterprises, local public services and the management of human resources
	Employment	Implement the reform of active labour market policies, in particular by strengthening the effectiveness of employment services. Facilitate the take-up of work for second earners
	Anti-poverty	Adopt and implement the national antipoverty strategy and review and



<u>Latvia</u>		rationalise social spending.
	Health services	Take further action to increase competition in regulated professions, the transport, health and retail sectors and the system of concessions
	Employment	Improve the adequacy of social assistance benefits and step up measures supporting recipients in finding and retaining work, including through increased coverage of activation measures.
<u>Lithuania</u>	Health	Improve the accessibility, quality and cost-effectiveness of the healthcare system.
	Employment	Strengthen investment in human capital and address skills shortages, by improving the labour market relevance of education, raising the quality of teaching and pursuing more active labour market policies and adult learning.
	Health	Improve the performance of the healthcare system by strengthening outpatient care, disease prevention and health promotion.
<u>Netherlands</u>	Social Welfare	Improve the coverage and adequacy of unemployment benefits and social assistance.
	Workforce	Tackle remaining barriers to hiring staff on permanent contracts and facilitate the transition from temporary to permanent contracts
<u>Poland</u>	Employment	Increase participation in the labour market, by starting to reform the preferential pension arrangements, removing obstacles to more permanent types of employment and improving the labour market-relevance of education and training.
<u>Portugal</u>	Health	Ensure the long-term sustainability of the health sector, without compromising access to primary healthcare.
	Employment	Ensure the effective activation of the long term unemployed and improve the coordination between employment and social services. Strengthen incentives for firms to hire through permanent contracts
<u>Romania</u>	Employment	Strengthen the National Employment Agency's services to employers and jobseekers, in particular by tailoring services to jobseeker profiles, better linking them with social services and reaching out to unregistered young people.
	Education	Take action to prevent early school leaving and increase the provision of quality education, in particular among Roma.
	Healthcare	Curb informal payments in the healthcare system and increase the availability of outpatient care.
	Public Services	Improve access to integrated public services, extend basic infrastructure and foster economic diversification, in particular in rural areas. Adopt and implement the transport master plan.



<u>Slovakia</u>		Strengthen public investment project prioritisation and preparation.
	Employment	Improve activation measures for the long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged groups, including individualised services and targeted training.
	Gender / Employment	Facilitate the employment of women, in particular by extending the provision of affordable, quality childcare.
	Education	Improve educational outcomes by making the teaching profession more attractive and by increasing the participation of Roma children from early childhood in mainstream education.
	Public procurement	Reinforce the shift from price only to quality -based competition and improve the prosecution of illicit practices in public procurement
<u>Slovenia</u>	Healthcare & Care	Complete and implement the reform of the long-term care and healthcare systems, making them more cost-efficient to ensure long-term sustainability of accessible and quality care.
	Employment	Increase the employability of low-skilled and older workers, including through targeted lifelong learning and activation measures.
<u>Spain</u>	Public Procurement	Enhance control mechanisms for public procurement and coordination of procurement policies across government levels
	Employment	Take further measures to improve labour market integration, by focusing on individualised support and strengthening the effectiveness of training measures. Enhance the capacity of regional employment services and reinforce their coordination with social services.
	Care	Address gaps and disparities in minimum income schemes and improve family support schemes, including access to quality child-care and long-term care.
<u>United Kingdom</u>	Housing	Take further steps to boost housing supply, including by implementing the reforms of the national planning policy framework.
	Employment	Address skills mismatches and provide for skills progression, including by strengthening the quality of apprenticeships
	Childcare	Further improve the availability of affordable, high-quality, full-time childcare.



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