



Mental Health Europe’s analysis of the 2019 Country Specific Recommendations

June 2019

Introduction

Like every year, [Mental Health Europe \(MHE\)](#) prepared an analysis of the 2019 Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) of the European Semester for its members.

The European Semester is the annual cycle of policy coordination among Member States of the European Union (EU). It is the main tool for the EU to monitor progress on policies, including the implementation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), and their impact at the national level. Issues that are monitored through this process include social and employment policies, health policies and healthcare systems, the state of deinstitutionalisation and community-based services.

As a part of this process, every year the European Commission prepares tailor-made policy advice to Member States on how to improve the impact of policies and better invest resources. These policy advices are the CSRs. Member States are then expected to implement the CSRs and their implementation will be monitored through the following cycle of the European Semester.

If you wish to learn more about the European Semester and how you could get involved, watch [MHE’s webinar on the topic](#). Should you have any question or wish to know more, contact MHE Senior Policy Officer, Laura Marchetti (laura.marchetti@mhe-sme.org).

2019 CSRs: our analysis

The table below presents short analyses of the recommendations and their preamble vis-à-vis topics of relevance for MHE membership. These topics include, but are not limited to, social policies and inclusion, employment, healthcare systems and human rights policies.

Each analysis is a short indication of what the European Commission recommends to a Member State with the purpose of improving the impact of national and European policies. These are not exhaustive accounts of each CSRs. For more detailed information, see the whole CSRs [here](#) (available in the national language of the country). By clicking on the name of the country below, you will directly access to the given CSR in English.

Country Specific Recommendations	Analysis
Austria	The European Commission recommends ensuring the sustainability of the health and long-term care systems. It is also recommended supporting full-time employment among women, including by improving childcare services, and boosting labour market outcomes for the low skilled and raising the levels of basic skills for disadvantaged groups, including people with a migrant background.
Belgium	The European Commission recommends continuing reforms to ensure the fiscal sustainability of long-term care. It is also recommended to remove disincentives to work and strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies, in particular for the low skilled, older workers and people with a migrant background.

	The preamble also refers to beneficiaries of disability schemes who often face financial disincentives in taking up full-time employment.
Bulgaria	The European Commission recommends improving the quality, labour market relevance, and inclusiveness of education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities. It is also recommended addressing social inclusion through improved access to integrated employment and social services and more effective minimum income support. Access to health services should be improved, including by reducing out-of-pocket payments and addressing shortages of health professionals. The lack of an integrated approach towards active inclusion is deemed to undermine ability of services to provide comprehensive support for the most vulnerable, such children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and people living in rural areas.
Croatia	The European Commission recommends delivering on the education reform and improving both access to education and training at all levels and their quality and labour market relevance. It is also recommended to consolidate social benefits and improve their capacity to reduce poverty, which concerns many elderly people and persons with disabilities. The coordination among labour market measures, institutions and social services should be strengthen.
Cyprus	The European Commission recommends completing reforms aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the public employment, and reinforcing outreach and activation support for young people. It is also recommended to deliver the reform of the education and training system as well as to take measures to ensure that the National Health System becomes operational in 2020, as planned, while preserving its long-term sustainability.
Czech Republic	Due to limited capacity, public employment services currently fall short of providing jobseekers with personalised, continuous support. Increasing the outreach and activation capacities of public employment services, together with effective and well-targeted active labour market policies would help boost the participation of groups in a disadvantaged situation. For these reasons, the European Commission recommends fostering the employment of groups in a disadvantaged situation, including persons with disabilities. It is also recommended to improve the long-term fiscal sustainability of the health-care system.
Denmark	The European Commission recommends focussing investment-related economic policy on education and skills, as well as research and innovation. The preamble also notes that it would be beneficial to focus on a better integration of groups that are in a disadvantaged situation or marginalised, including people with a migrant background, people with reduced work capacity and disabilities.
Estonia	The European Commission recommends addressing skills shortages and fostering innovation by improving the capacity and labour market relevance of the education and training system. It is also recommended to improve the adequacy of the social safety net and access to affordable and integrated social services. As a matter of fact, the preamble notes that there is a need to deliver affordable and good quality social and health care services in an integrated way and to develop a comprehensive long-term care framework. It is also pointed

	out that investments supporting social inclusion and social infrastructures would foster inclusive growth.
Finland	The European Commission recommends improving the cost-effectiveness of and equal access to social and healthcare services. It is also recommended to improve incentives to accept work and enhance skills and active inclusion, notably through well-integrated services for people that are unemployed and inactive, including persons with a migrant background and persons with disabilities. The preamble notes that helping these groups to join and remain in the labour market requires tailor-made and integrated activation and rehabilitation services and policies.
France	The European Commission recommends fostering labour market integration for all job seekers, ensuring equal opportunities, with a particular focus on groups in a vulnerable situation – including people with a migrant background – and addressing skills shortages and mismatches.
Germany	The European Commission recommends reducing disincentives to work more hours, in particular for low-wage and second earners.
Greece	The European Commission recommends focusing investment-related economic policies on, inter alia, research and development, education, skills, employability, health, and the renewal of urban areas. The preamble notes that supporting the most deprived and promoting the social integration of children at risk of poverty, of persons with disabilities, of migrants and refugees, while paying attention to geographic disparities, would improve social inclusion in Greece.
Hungary	The European Commission recommends continuing the labour market integration of groups in vulnerable situations, including people with disabilities, and improving the adequacy of social assistance and unemployment benefits. It is also recommended to improve health outcomes by supporting preventive health measures and strengthening primary health care.
Ireland	The European Commission recommends addressing the expected increase in age-related expenditure by making the healthcare system more cost-effective. The preamble notes that the health system reform that is planned represents a credible vision for making the health system universally accessible and sustainable, meeting the demands of an ageing population and shifting care into the community, with a stronger focus on prevention. It is also recommended to provide personalised active integration support and facilitate upskilling, in particular for groups in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities. Increase access to affordable and quality childcare
Italy	The European Commission recommends ensuring that active labour market and social policies are effectively integrated and reach out notably to young people and vulnerable groups. It is also recommended to support women’s participation in the labour market through a comprehensive strategy, including through access to quality childcare and long-term care. The preamble notes that the provision of healthcare largely varies across regions, affecting access, equity and efficiency, and could be improved through better administration and by monitoring the delivery of standard levels of services. More home and community-based care and long-term

	care is key to provide support to people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups.
Latvia	<p>The European Commission recommends addressing social exclusion notably by improving the adequacy of minimum income benefits, minimum old-age pensions and income support for people with disabilities. It is also recommended to increase the quality and efficiency of education and training in particular of low-skilled workers and jobseekers, including by strengthening the participation in vocational education and training and adult learning. Increase the accessibility, quality and cost-effectiveness of the healthcare system should also be a priority.</p> <p>The preamble notes that investments, including infrastructure, are needed to improve access to childcare, long-term care, employment and other social services, and to enable integration of health and social services, including the transition from institutional to community-based care.</p>
Lithuania	<p>Since many members of Lithuanian society, including persons with disabilities, face a particularly high risk of poverty and social exclusion, T the European Commission recommends addressing income inequality, poverty and social exclusion, including by improving the design of the benefit system. It is also recommended to improve quality and efficiency at all education and training levels, including adult learning, and to increase the quality, affordability and efficiency of the healthcare system.</p>
Luxembourg	<p>The European Commission recommends increasing the employment rate of older workers by enhancing their employment opportunities and employability.</p>
Malta	<p>The European Commission recommends ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the healthcare system. Despite the introduction of community-based and home care services were introduced to address the increasing demand for long-term care, their impact on the healthcare system has not materialised yet.</p> <p>Investment-related economic policy should focus, inter alia, on inclusive education and training.</p>
The Netherlands	<p>The European Commission recommends promoting adequate social protection for the self-employed, and tackling bogus self-employment. It is also recommended to strengthen comprehensive life-long learning and upgrade skills notably of those at the margins of the labour market and the inactive.</p>
Poland	<p>The European Commission recommends taking steps to increase labour market participation, including by improving access to childcare and long-term care, and removing remaining obstacles to more permanent types of employment. It is also recommended to foster quality education and skills relevant to the labour market, especially through adult learning.</p> <p>Investment-related economic policy should focus, inter alia, on healthcare.</p>
Portugal	<p>The European Commission recommends adopting measures to address labour market segmentation and improving the skills level of the population. It is also recommended to increase the number of higher education graduates and improve the effectiveness and adequacy of the social safety net.</p>
Romania	<p>The European Commission recommends improving the quality and inclusiveness of education, in particular for disadvantaged groups. It is</p>

	<p>also recommended to improve skills by increasing the labour market relevance of vocational education and training and higher education. Coverage and quality of social services should be increased, along with the completion of the minimum inclusion income reform. The preamble notes that people with disabilities are given only limited support for independent living and accessing employment, and that improvements in community care are much needed but are delayed. Access to and cost-efficiency of healthcare should be improved.</p>
Slovakia	<p>The European Commission recommends improving the quality and inclusiveness of education at all levels and fostering skills. It is also recommended to enhance access to affordable and quality childcare and long-term care, and promoting integration of disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities. Investment-related economic policy should focus, inter alia, on healthcare.</p>
Slovenia	<p>The European Commission recommends adopting and implementing reforms in healthcare and long-term care that ensure quality, accessibility and long-term fiscal sustainability. It is also recommended to increase the employability of low-skilled and older workers by improving labour market relevance of education and training, lifelong learning and activation measures.</p>
Spain	<p>The European Commission recommends ensuring that employment and social services have the capacity to provide effective support and fostering transitions towards open-ended contracts, including by simplifying the system of hiring incentives. It is also recommended to improve support for families and address coverage gaps in national unemployment assistance and regional minimum income schemes. Reducing early school leaving and improving educational outcomes should be better addressed, as well increasing cooperation between education and businesses with a view to improving the provision of labour market relevant skills and qualifications.</p>
Sweden	<p>The European Commission recommends focussing investment related economic policy on education and skills.</p>
United Kingdom	<p>The European Commission recommends focussing investment-related economic policy on research and innovation, housing, training and improving skills.</p>