

# European Semester Quarterly

## July 2016, Issue 2

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## Editorial

Eurodiaconia members have been actively involved in the European Semester process since its start and from various angles: providing recommendations for the Annual Growth Survey, the country reports, and the Country Specific Recommendations, as well as providing ex post analysis of all of these. Our members continue engaging with the process and identifying new opportunities to make their voices heard. What are some of the key challenges they are facing, and how can they be addressed?

The current issue of the European Semester Quarterly explores two key challenges more closely.

A first challenge revolves around impacting the actual (social) content of the Semester. This is surely not limited to NGOs – it also concerns trade unions and institutional actors such as national parliaments. An interview with a representative from our German member organisation Diakonie Deutschland highlights various practical steps to take in order to advocate more effectively in the context of the Semester. Surely, the question to what extent the Semester then impacts national decision-making is another matter. For instance, are Country Specific Recommendations having any real impact on national policies? The short answer is yes - but slowly. This is what can be expected from a mechanism based on the balance between cooperation for common goals and the protection of national sovereignties.

A second challenge concerns the tension between the pursuit of social objectives and the promotion of policies which threaten to undermine empowerment and care for the most vulnerable. As this issue's thematic feature on migration illustrates, there are often competing interest in the European Semester. It is aiming towards poverty reduction and social inclusion on the one hand, and competitiveness (through employment) as the overarching objective on the other hand. At Eurodiaconia, we believe that it is possible to reconcile the two – but it cannot be done by continuing along the current path, which has put fiscal consolidation and economic growth at the centre.

In the aftermath of the recent vote on the European Union in the UK and with Euroscepticism increasing in a number of EU Member States, it seems that trust in the European project is reaching a historical low. Eurodiaconia believes that the message of its members remains pertinent as ever: social investment is key to ensuring a more balanced European Semester, which promotes inclusive, sustainable growth for all. It is key to developing a European Union which derives its meaning from connecting to the real needs and concerns of all those who live in it.

Please give us your feedback on your engagement and also on this publication – we want to hear your views, experiences and ideas for future editions.

With best wishes,  
Eurodiaconia's Semester policy team

If you have any questions, suggestions or experiences to share, please do not hesitate to contact [stephan.burger@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:stephan.burger@eurodiaconia.org), [giacomo.manca@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:giacomo.manca@eurodiaconia.org) or [Clotilde.clark-foulquier@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:Clotilde.clark-foulquier@eurodiaconia.org)

# Thematic feature: How is migration addressed by the European Semester?

Migration has become a top priority for the European Union and is therefore one of the top 10 priorities of the Juncker Commission. However, at first sight it seems to be hardly visible within the framework of the European Semester.

Indeed, as a cycle of economic policy guidance and surveillance, the European Semester concentrates on structural reforms, fiscal policies and the prevention of excessive macroeconomic

imbalances. For instance, there is no specific poverty reduction target for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and the European Semester does not address the political and legal framework of migration directly. So how does this European Semester framework link to the huge challenge - and opportunity - that migration has become for the EU?

## 1. Comprehensive poverty reduction policies and target

The Europe 2020 strategy has set up 10 quantifiable targets for Member States to reach by 2020, including a poverty reduction target. In this framework, the European Semester's monitoring and coordination of poverty reduction policies in general (aiming toward the poverty reduction target) addresses the protection of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as well.

The issue is not the clear definition of migrant integration; it could be said that this issue is mainstreamed. For instance, the 2016 CSR to Sweden on housing (and its related explanatory notes) addresses the issue of integration of

The recently published [“Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals”](#) reminds that whilst the competence for integration policy lies primarily with the Member States, the EU plays an important role in supporting, developing and coordinating Member States' actions and policies on integration.

It also repeats that Integration is a precondition for an inclusive, cohesive and prosperous society.

migrants indirectly. In doing so, it encourages Sweden to proactively adapt its housing market, enabling among other things a better integration of migrants (*“Lack of available and affordable housing also limits labour market mobility and is a constraint for the effective integration of migrants into the labour market”*). However, the main criticism that can be made

of the European Semester in addressing poverty in general is also true as regards to its approach to the integration of migrants: it is too narrowly limited to an almost exclusive employment approach and does not genuinely aim to support the most vulnerable, those furthest away from the labour market.

## 2. Annual Growth Survey 2016 highlights importance of migrants integration

The AGS 2016 emphasizes the changing situation of migration to Europe and the consequent need to set up comprehensive integration measures: “Finally, comprehensive integration measures are required for those further away from the labour market and especially in response to the recent arrival of a large number of refugees. Integration of migrants and especially refugees calls for a comprehensive approach to facilitate their access to the labour market and more generally

their participation in society.”<sup>1</sup> The accent on the political need of integrating migrants is key because it appears in the AGS, which initiates the European Semester cycle and can therefore be seen as fundamental in linking the integration of migrants to the European Semester framework.

### 3. Labour market participation of third country nationals

The European Semester 2016 places a strong emphasis on employment through skills, education and training. In this context, the integration of third country nationals in the labour market is bringing the issue of integration of migrants to the centre of the European Semester through the back door. As highlighted by the EMCO in its “[Horizontal opinion on the 2016 Country Specific Recommendations including the results of the multilateral surveillance on the 2015 CSRs](#)”, labour market participation of third country nationals is a priority to address. They write that: “*The ongoing issue of labour market participation of people from migrant backgrounds has been accentuated by the recent influx of asylum seekers: it will continue to be important to address the most urgent needs and facilitate the labour market integration of refugees without forgetting those who have been in the country for longer.*”

This has led to many countries being asked to address the education and labour integration discrepancy (segmentation of the labour market) between nationals and people with a migrant background. The examples below show how the European Semester framework enables the European Commission to encourage Member States to work towards a better integration of third country nationals through the Country Specific Recommendations 2016:

- **Austria**

“The drop-out rate of pupils with a migrant background is more than three times higher than that of those without a migrant background and there is an additional challenge to integrate young refugees and migrants of compulsory school age and above into the education and training system.

(...) HEREBY RECOMMENDS that Austria take action in 2016 and 2017 to:

2. Improve the labour market participation of women. Take steps to improve the educational achievements of disadvantaged young people, in particular those from a migrant background.”

- **Belgium**

“Move forward with education and vocational training reforms and provide training support for disadvantaged groups, in particular people from a migrant background.”

- **Denmark**

“Labour market inclusion and improving the employability of disadvantaged groups remain a challenge. This particularly applies to people with a non-EU migrant background, including those who have resided in Denmark for a long time.”

- **Finland**

“The arrival of a comparatively large number of migrants and refugees in Finland in 2015 could serve to counter the effects of population ageing, but only if they are successfully integrated into the labour market and the education system (...)

Increase incentives to accept work and ensure targeted and sufficient active labour market measures, including for people with a migrant background.”

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<sup>1</sup> AGS 2016, page 12  
[http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/2016/ags2016\\_annual\\_growth\\_survey.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/2016/ags2016_annual_growth_survey.pdf)

Similar comments or recommendations have also been addressed to Germany and Sweden. Despite the Italian CSRs recognising that “the 2016 stability programme indicates that the budgetary impact of the exceptional inflow of refugees as well as of exceptional security measures is significant and that these should be considered as an unusual event outside the control of the government”, there is still no mention of migrant integration in the Italian document.

These examples show that the European Semester and the economic governance framework it serves aim to have a strong impact on integration policies. It is unfortunate then that the only area with a clear focus is integration through employment, as the only mentions of migrants in the CSRs link to integration through the labour market. Another question remains as

to what is the real impact of these measures on national policies.



The eighth priority of Jean-Claude Juncker's presidency is "Towards a European agenda on Migration", as he outlined during his speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 15 July 2014.

## The 2016 European Semester: a German perspective

Diakonie Deutschland has been involved in the European Semester process from the beginning. Every year around February/March, the German Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment invites Diakonie Deutschland to a consultation meeting around the National Reform Programme. Dr Stephanie Scholz, expert on European Affairs in the social context, represents her organisation at the annual consultation, sometimes together with a colleague working on poverty. Below, she shares her perspective on the Semester process in Germany, and provides some key tips for other diaconal organisations.

- Involved with the European Semester since 2010
- **Contact with the European Semester Officer:** Yes. Stephanie participated in consultation organised on NRP and CSRs.
- Main focus: NRP and CSRs.

Are you involved in the Semester as an individual organisation or as a member of a broader coalition?

Both. Diakonie Deutschland is part of the 'BAGFW', a collective of six large German welfare organisations (which also includes e.g. Caritas and the Red Cross), each of which



Stephanie Scholz is Diakonie Deutschland's European Policy Officer

provides services across the whole country to hundreds of thousands of persons in need. Diakonie Deutschland gets invited to consultations as a member of the BAGFW. However, during the meeting, we all represent our individual organisations and voice our own experiences and recommendations.

[Diakonie Deutschland ranks among the largest employers in the country and carries significant political weight. Do you feel this is adequately reflected in the Semester Process?](#)

In theory, there are many opportunities for influencing the Semester process and the government's priorities. But in practice, the space for meaningful dialogue is very limited. Firstly, we only have one consultation meeting per year, which takes place ahead of the publication of the drafted NRP. A follow-up meeting after the publication of the CSRs would be very useful.

Secondly, the annual consultation meeting provides only limited space for discussions on policy content. It is structured more like a briefing session, informing us about the timeline of the process. We use the discussion time afterwards to raise content-related concerns and

recommendations, but we rarely receive a direct response to these nor do we have the impression that the civil servants really grapple with the topics raised.

Thirdly, the timeframe for providing written contributions has remained narrow in spite of repeated calls for change. The BAGFW gets 7 days to compile a joint response to the draft NRP – given that the 7 days mostly include the weekend and that the response is supposed to incorporate input from six different major welfare organisations, time constraints pose a major challenge in our current engagement with the European Semester process.

[Looking more closely at policy content, do you feel your comments and recommendations are adequately reflected in key documents such as the NRP?](#)

The German government has taken on board some of our recommendations with regards to achieving Europe2020's education target in the 2016 NRP. However, for the past years, our main priority has been to call for a more ambitious definition of the poverty target.

At the moment, the German government defines poverty on the basis of a single indicator, namely long-term unemployment, and equates poverty reduction with job creation (regardless of job quality). We have repeatedly asked the government to consider all three EU-indicators when defining poverty, but the response has been that the indicators will not be discussed as long as the European Commission has not published its Midterm Review of Europe2020. The Review was scheduled for 2015. A year later, we are still waiting for it...



### Looking at your opportunities for engagement, have there been any positive developments over the last years?

Yes – the most significant development is that we no longer meet only with the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment. Since 2015, the Ministry for Economic Affairs and the Ministry for Family Affairs, Women, Elderly and Young Persons send representatives to the yearly consultation meeting as well.

This is important for us because we have the chance to raise our concerns about the social impact of certain economic measures directly with the responsible ministry. For example, this year, we asked the representative from the Ministry for Economic Affairs how the stronger social investment angle of the 2016 AGS was being translated into practice. Tellingly, she responded that the Ministry had not changed its general line because the renewed focus on social investment was not seen as a relevant issue for the Ministry of Economic Affairs. However, the representative seemed receptive to our arguments.

### Would you have tips for other NGOs who want to make their voices heard in the Semester?

Firstly, I would encourage other organisations to call for joint meetings with representatives from different Ministries. The Ministry for Economic

Affairs in particular is an important interlocutor, as it tends to be responsible for the coordination of the overall NRP drafting process (at least in Germany). Being in direct contact with the Ministry for Economic Affairs also enhances the chance of achieving greater coherence between economic and social priorities.

Secondly, I can recommend having a look at your country report, which the European Commission now publishes in February each year. In our experience, the country report tends to assess the social situation in a country more realistically than the national government; we have used some of the country report's observations to strengthen our own arguments and proposals.

Thirdly, it might be worthwhile to contact the European Commission desk officer for your country.<sup>2</sup> You can provide input for the next country report and, most importantly, provide suggestions during the drafting phase of the CSRs. For example, last year, the poverty expert of Diakonie Deutschland contacted one of the Commission desk officers for Germany to discuss the content of a potential CSR on poverty reduction.



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<sup>2</sup> In case you're not sure who the desk officers for your country are, please don't hesitate to contact the Eurodiaconia secretariat.



# European Semester Stakeholders:

## A closer look at the European Semester Alliance

The European Semester Alliance is a Brussels-based coalition of civil society organisations and trade unions, and it has been monitoring the European Semester process at both EU and national level since 2013. It currently has 17 members, which include Eurodiaconia, the European Anti-Poverty Network, Eurochild, Caritas, and many others.

### The origins of the Alliance

The European Semester touches on a broad variety of issues. It can influence employment conditions and stimulate healthcare reforms. Budgetary and macroeconomic priorities can affect environmental sustainability and the quality of social services. Concrete CSRs can propose changes regarding both childcare and pensions, affecting individuals across the lifecycle.

As such, the European Semester is a process concerning many actors. In 2013, a number of them decided to join hands in order to represent a stronger voice on the current and future direction of the Semester. The European Semester Alliance was born, representing a unique, cross-sectoral collaboration between trade unions, social and environmental organisations. The Alliance aims to influence EU and national decision-making in the context of the Semester through events and joint reports, but it also tries to empower national stakeholders by disseminating information and training materials.

### The aims of the Alliance

The core aim of the Alliance is to promote a Semester which is more democratic, social and sustainable by:

1) Raising awareness about the lack of space for meaningful stakeholder involvement in the Semester process. At a time when the trust of European citizens in the European project has reached a historical low, the Alliance calls for a Semester which connects to the real needs of citizens by giving a stronger role to non-institutional actors.

2) Promoting a better balance between social and economic/fiscal priorities. Social organisations, including Eurodiaconia and its members, feel that the Semester currently exists mainly as a tool for budgetary consolidation, rather than one that promotes poverty reduction and inclusive growth.

3) Promoting effective action towards environmental sustainability. The Alliance calls on the European Commission to better harness the potential of the Semester in order to address environmentally harmful subsidies and to promote renewables.

### The added value of the Alliance

The cross-sectoral nature of the Alliance has been recognised by policy makers as one of its key strengths. It represents the unified voice of actors working on a broad range of issues across the policy spectrum.

Through the Semester Alliance, Eurodiaconia has been able to reinforce and complement the observations and concerns of its members with additional evidence from other networks, and to communicate its vision to high-level decision makers such as the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Parliament. The European Semester Alliance organises an annual event in the European Parliament and publishes annual stock-taking reports for various phases of the Semester process.

However, the European Semester Alliance also aims to build the capacity of national organisations. It has published an online toolkit which outlines practical ways to engage with the Semester process, which can be accessed [here](#). Furthermore, the Alliance has concrete experience with national coalition-building, having set up three ‘national Alliances’ in Ireland, Denmark and Bulgaria over the course of 2014.

As such, the Semester Alliance can support Eurodiaconia members in connecting to other Semester stakeholders in any given country.

The Semester Alliance raises awareness about the lack of space for stakeholder involvement in the Semester, promotes a better balance between social and budgetary priorities and claims for effective action for environmental sustainability.

To find out more about the members and the actions of the European Semester Alliance, please contact the Eurodiaconia secretariat or have a look at the official website: <https://semesteralliance.net/>.



On several occasions the Alliance has co-organised meetings in order to raise awareness of its goals for politicians and decision makers. Pictured here is the meeting “*The AGS behind, the Semester ahead, what proposals to make Europe 2020 more social, democratic and sustainable?*” organised in cooperation with Sergio Gutierrez Prieto (S&D) and Marian Harkin (ALDE), members of the Parliament.

## Institutional Developments

### Reminder: What is EPSCO?

*The “EPSCO Council” brings together the 28 EU ministers responsible for employment, social affairs, health and consumer policy from all EU member states. They meet four times a year and regularly discuss the social and employment aspects of the European Semester. The EPSCO is guided and advised in its work, and particularly in monitoring the implementation of employment and social policy-related Country Specific Recommendations, by two advisory committees: The Employment Committee (EMCO) and Social Protection Committee (SPC).*

### What has happened?

On 16th June 2016, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council met for the second time in 2016 to discuss, among other things, the European Semester 2016. Ministers held a policy debate on the employment and social policy aspects of the 2016 European Semester and approved the employment and social aspects of the country specific recommendations (CSRs) that will be formally adopted by the Council on 12 July.

Member States representatives were asked to discuss important concerns linked to the semester. Interestingly enough, these were points that had been raised by Eurodiaconia members in the past. Member States discussed in particular the balance of the CSRs, the appropriateness of the focus given to skills,

education and training and the relative absence of public recognition of the social component of the Semester.

### The awareness of a lack of ownership

Several ministers highlighted the need to improve the visibility of the European Semester which is too often seen as a “technocratic process” which is difficult to communicate. They spoke of the importance of involving more actors in the process in order to improve ownership, an ownership that is essential for a structural reform to take place. This is very much in line with Eurodiaconia’s analysis of the semester and its flawed governance. However, recent changes in the time line of key documents such as the staff working document have been a positive step towards making the European Semester process more accessible and transparent.

### More focus on social inclusion and the fight against poverty

As delegates were commenting on the appropriateness of the CSRs addressed to their countries, many agreed the CSRs were balanced, while insisting on recognition of the multi-faceted nature of poverty and the consequent need for an integrated approach. The Czech Republic for instance stated it would have welcomed a stronger focus on social inclusion and job quality, social services – in particular their accessibility and quality - and the fight against poverty. Others echoed this, including Slovenia who asked for “more attention to poverty reduction” and Luxembourg who insisted on the need to address the root causes of poverty as well.

## Discussion around the focus on employment

To the Presidency's question on the appropriateness of the focus given to skills (and basically to employment), some member states raised their voice to warn that an exclusive employment focus would be wrong. Croatia for instance noted that "poverty often affects groups that are completely outside of the labour market" and that policies must address the root causes of poverty through an integrated approach. The Denmark representative stated that the best actions to combat poverty are education and employment, to ensure that "children grow up with parents who go to work instead of living on benefits". Portugal later reacted by insisting that other aspects should be taken into account, such as child poverty and in-work poverty, because "having a job is not always a guarantee' for societal participation".

The discussion was concluded by Marianne Thyssen who maintained that poverty is clearly a concern for the European Semester, and that this is reflected in the CSRs (in particular relating to adequacy of social and unemployment benefits) and that the emphasis put on poverty should be understood broadly.

The Council finally adopted the employment and social aspects of the country specific recommendations (CSRs) as well as Council conclusion on poverty and social inclusion "acknowledging the multidimensional nature of poverty" and the consequent need for an

integrated approach. The next EPSCO Council meetings will take place on 13th October 2016 and 8-9 December 2016.

## For more information

- [Council Conclusion on poverty and social inclusion](#)
- [The Employment Committee](#) (EMCO) and its [members](#)
- [The Social Protection Committee](#) (SPC) and its [members](#)

### Upcoming Council meetings addressing the European Semester

**21 June:** *The General Affairs Council discusses the recommendations approved by the other Council Configurations and submits them to the EU Council for endorsement*

**28-29 June:** *the EU Council endorses the country-specific recommendations*

**12 July:** *the ECOFIN council formally adopts the country-specific recommendations*

## 2016 Country Specific recommendations: a social shift?

The Country Specific Recommendations in 2016 were issued on May 18<sup>th</sup> <sup>3</sup> and presented as having a strong focus on social and employment issues by Commissioner Thyssen: about a third of the 114 Recommendations address social or employment conditions. The number of CSRs has decreased in number compared to last year in order to make them more achievable objectives.

In the press release accompanying the CSRs publication, the European Commission acknowledges a moderate economic recovery, and admits that a lot more is still to be done. It presents the recommendations as the tools to keep the pace and improve the recovery.

### The contents

According to several civil society actors, in many cases there is a certain inconsistency between the economic performances/ achievements of a country, especially when it comes to fiscal imbalances and the recommendations in the social and employment field. Some countries were asked to improve their social and health services and to deliver better unemployment policies. They have also been subjected to severe financial reproaches and asked to commit towards more financial sustainability. The rationale between financial sustainability and social protection often appears contradictory and very hard to pursue for certain countries. This eventuality presents an even higher risk that the

### What are CSRs?

*The Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) are policy recommendations addressed by the European Commission to each member state within the Semester process.*

*They are based on a review of member states' economic and social performance in the previous year, on the countries records on the EU-wide priorities set out in the Annual Growth Survey, and on the National Reform Programmes presented by the member states in April. CSRs are supposed to recommend goals that should be concrete, targeted and measurable, moreover they should be realistically achievable in the next 12-18 months.*

*In June the CSRs are analysed by the ECOFIN Council<sup>4</sup> and subsequently approved as Council Recommendations. The final adoption of the CSRs in July concludes the European Semester.*

“social” recommendations are left aside and given a lower priority.

At the same time, “social” CSRs are missing in the files regarding the countries who are performing better than others in terms of macroeconomic records.

For example, Poland, a country which is experiencing strong economic growth but whose Country Report<sup>4</sup> denounces “a lack of adequacy of the social benefits and a small and underperforming social protection system on

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<sup>3</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-16-1724\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1724_en.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/cr2016\\_poland\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/cr2016_poland_en.pdf)

poverty reduction” did not receive any recommendation on this issue.

As several Eurodiaconia partners have underlined, in too many cases the policies prescribed in the Country Reports are not at all reflected in the Country Specific Recommendations: this lack of consistency sometimes produces recommendations which are almost in opposition with what expressed by the Report (see below).

## Poverty

The number of Member States which have received CSRs directly regarding poverty has increased with respect to last year: 11 countries were given a recommendation to reduce poverty (last year there were 6).

This number, however, does not match with the substantial failure of the Europe2020 poverty target, as the number of EU citizens at risk of poverty has grown in comparison to 2010 – when the Europe2020 targets were approved.

There is a **certain lack of consistency with the country reports in the case of several countries**: the Czech Republic, which is among the countries presenting the lowest poverty and social exclusion rates in the EU according to the Czech Country Report, <sup>5</sup>, has been included in the group of countries receiving a “poverty recommendation”.

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[http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/cr2016\\_czech\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/cr2016_czech_en.pdf)

In this regard, the **lack of attention devoted to child poverty** is also alarming: in spite of being the object of a lot of attention and strategies, and affecting many countries in Europe, only one country (Ireland) received an explicit mention of the need for fighting child poverty. No mention was made of children in institutional care facilities and of unaccompanied minors.

## Roma Inclusion

A positive comment can be made regarding the focus on Roma: Roma inclusion is mentioned in 5 CSRs (to Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia) concerning the right to integration in the mainstream education system: with this the European Commission acknowledges the rampant weight of the discrimination against the Roma community, especially concerning the segregation of Roma children in education. The overrepresentation of Roma amongst the long-term unemployed and the lack of inclusion of this community in the labour market are also mentioned in the preamble to the CSRs of some of these countries.

## Employment

Employment and the labour market reforms are a general concern for many countries, and are





Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President of the EC in charge of the Euro and Social Dialogue, Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, and Pierre Moscovici, Commissioner in charge of Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, presented the Country Specific Recommendations in a joint press conference on Wednesday 18 of May.

part of the recommendations in 20 cases (Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Slovakia). However, the concrete recommendations made are very diverse: while some countries are asked to develop more open and inclusive labour markets with stronger social safety nets (Ireland, Hungary and Lithuania received a recommendation to increase the duration, quality and adequacy of

unemployment benefits), other countries as France, Belgium and Finland were criticised for having “too generous” unemployment benefits. Many other countries such as Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Italy, Finland, Germany, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia have received CSRs asking to support the access to the job market for vulnerable groups, such as young persons, the long-term unemployed, women or people with a migrant background. Temporary forms of employment in countries such as Germany, France, the Netherlands, Poland and Portugal are criticised in favour of more stable contracts (open-ended or permanent ones).

To conclude, the 2016 recommendations are characterised by a **strong ambiguity** by encouraging both fiscal sustainability and a better expenditure on employment and social policies.

This balance risks to induce those member states experiencing more troubles with economic performances to prioritise lower quality social security schemes, labour market contracts, but also of less ambitious poverty reduction schemes and less resources to service provision.

### What can you do?

- Contact the **Country Desk Officers** at the Commission: share your views on the adequacy of the 2016 CSRs with the Desk Officer(s) for your country, and provide input for the next Country Report.
- **Contact Eurodiaconia**: Share your comments on the CSRs with Eurodiaconia and the European Semester Alliance: we will use them to advocate for a more social and equal Europe.



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