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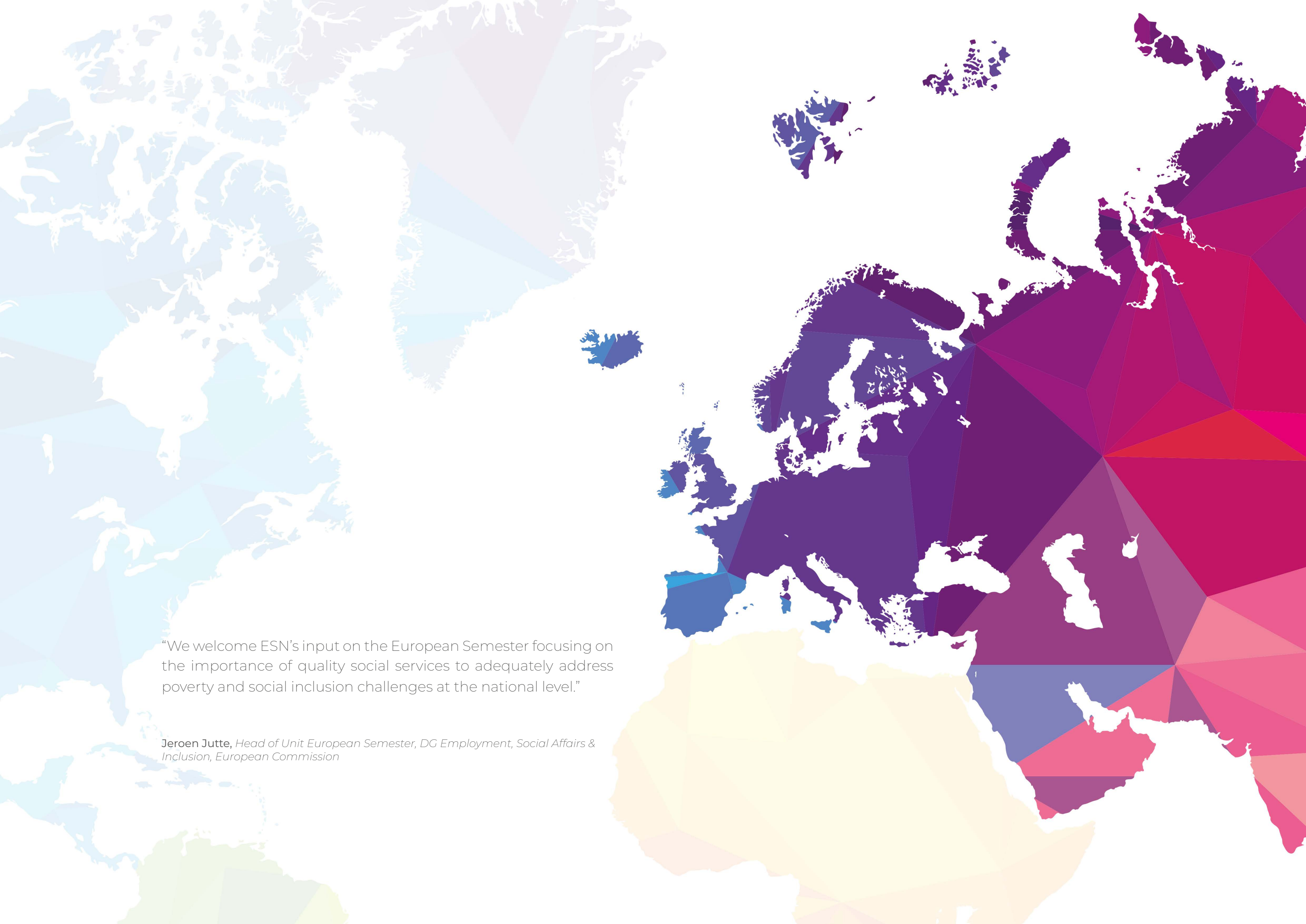
SOCIAL SERVICES for a SOCIAL EUROPE



EUROPEAN SEMESTER 2020



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“We welcome ESN’s input on the European Semester focusing on the importance of quality social services to adequately address poverty and social inclusion challenges at the national level.”

Jeroen Jutte, *Head of Unit European Semester, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, European Commission*

About the European Social Network (ESN)

The European Social Network (ESN) is the independent network for local public social services in Europe. It brings together organisations that plan, deliver, finance, manage, research, and regulate local public social services, including health, social welfare, employment, education and housing. We support the development of effective social policy and social care practice through the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

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About this report

This report brings together the analysis conducted by the members of ESN's Reference Group on the European Semester, which represents 24 EU Member States. The report illustrates the social situation according to social services in these Member States and across Europe, with recommendations for the 2020 European Semester cycle.

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INTRODUCTION

Reference Group on the European Semester

The European Social Network (ESN) is the leading network for public social services in Europe. Social services are responsible for the provision of support for vulnerable people to improve their wellbeing and to help them become as autonomous as possible. This includes supporting families, homeless people, adults with disabilities, children at risk of harm, migrants, and older people.

Public social services in Europe usually operate within local or regional authorities where they plan, regulate, manage, finance and provide a range of different services. Despite their key role in implementation, they are often far from policy and decision-making processes at European level. ESN tries to bridge this gap through its Reference Group on the European Semester (hereafter 'the Group').

The Group includes representatives from national associations of social services directors, social services in regional and local authorities, and national associations of social services professionals (see full list in acknowledgments). Set-up in 2014, the Group aims to share awareness of issues social services face at local level, provide policy recommendations to the European Commission on how these issues can be tackled, and raise the profile of social services in European level policy-making.

Methodology

Each year, the Group follows the European Commission's cycle of policy coordination with the Member States known as the European Semester.

The Group members do this by completing a tailored questionnaire prepared by the ESN Secretariat. In 2019, the Group represented 24 countries:

- Austria (AT)
- Belgium (BE)
- Croatia (HR)
- Czech Republic (CZ)
- Denmark (DK)
- Estonia (EE)
- Finland (FI)
- France (FR)
- Germany (DE)
- Greece (GR)
- Ireland (IE)
- Italy (IT)
- Latvia (LV)
- Lithuania (LT)
- Malta (MT)

- the Netherlands (NL)
- Poland (PL)
- Portugal (PT)
- Romania (RO)
- Slovakia (SK)
- Slovenia (SI)
- Spain (ES)
- Sweden (SE)
- United Kingdom* (UK)

*There is one representative from England and one from Scotland. Their analysis is brought together into one UK profile.

The 2019 questionnaires covered three policy areas which are relevant for social services:

- Poverty and social protection
- Social housing and homelessness
- Quality of social services

Annual Meeting of the Reference Group

Each year the Group meets with officials from the European Commission in Brussels. In 2019 the Group met with European Commission officials on 27-28 June¹ following their questionnaire contributions.

The meeting is an opportunity for Group members to discuss in person some of the issues raised in their questionnaires and to exchange their views on the European Semester cycle with officials from the European Commission. It also provides Group members the chance to engage in mutual learning, by discussing common social issues in their countries.

The report

Outcomes of the meeting, along with the analysis provided by the Group in the questionnaires, are collected into this report put together by ESN. The 2019 report contains 24 individual country profiles and policy recommendations based on the input of the Group. ESN also collaborates with the European Social Observatory (OSE) which provides a cross-country analysis of the issues described by the Group. This report is shared with the European Commission to inform the next cycle of policy analysis and recommendations of the European Semester as well as with member states representatives. The Group members are encouraged and supported to meet national government representatives in their countries to discuss the findings.

THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER

Introduced in 2010, the European Semester is the cycle through which the European Commission coordinates the macro-economic and social policies of Member States.

It follows an annual cycle:

- The Annual Growth Survey¹ issued in November sets out general economic and social priorities for the EU.
- Individual Country Reports² are issued in winter for each Member State to provide in-depth analysis of the social and economic state-of-play.
- National Reform Programmes and Stability/Convergence Programmes³ are presented by the Member States in spring to outline specific policies each country will implement to address the economic and social priorities raised by the Commission in their assessment of each country.
- Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs)⁴ are issued in June to provide tailored policy guidance to each Member State.

The economic goal of the European Semester is to monitor macro-economic imbalances to avoid excessive government debt and promote economic growth. For the social aspects of the European Semester, the aim is to promote social inclusion, according to the objectives outlined by the European Commission's social policy initiatives, especially the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR).

The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)

The EPSR aims to deliver new and more effective rights for citizens through 20 key principles⁵. Jean-Claude Juncker, previous President of the European Commission, announced the EPSR in his 2015 State of the Union speech⁶ and it was jointly signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017⁷.

Over half of the principles directly relate to the work of social services including support for children, inclusion of people with disabilities, long-term care and housing. The principles, however, are not legally binding and are rather aspirational in nature. Mainstreaming the EPSR principles into the European Semester policy analysis and guidance is a way to ensure implementation.

This has been tried by the Commission in the 2019 country reports by benchmarking Member States against 12 separate indicators taken from the European Commission's social scoreboard, as outlined below:

Table 1. The Social Scoreboard in the 2019 Country Reports⁸

Equal opportunities and access to the labour market	Early leavers from education and training
	Gender employment gap
	Income quintile ratio
	At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate
	Youth NEET rate
Dynamic labour markets and fair working conditions	Employment rate
	Unemployment rate
	Long term unemployment
	GDHI* per capita growth
	Net earnings of a full-time single worker earning AW
Social protection and inclusion	Impact of social transfers on poverty reduction
	Children aged less than 3 years in formal child care
	Self-reported unmet need for medical care
	Individuals' level of digital skills

*Gross Disposable Income of Households

Colour Coding						
Best performance	Better than average	On average	Good but to monitor	Weak but improving	To watch	Critical situations

For each indicator, every country is given a ranking from 'critical situation' to 'best performers' based on their performance in relation to the other Member States, and weighted for recent changes in performance.

The Group's analysis of the 2019 European Semester

In 2019, the Group focussed on three important issues affecting local social policy implementation:

1. The adequacy of the social protection system and services to address poverty
2. Growing challenges linked to social housing and homelessness
3. Overall quality of social services

In the country profiles included in this report, issues above were grouped into poverty and social protection, including responses to homelessness and promoting social housing, and social services quality.

Poverty and Social Protection

The Group discussed the mixed situation in European countries in relation to integrated social benefits and services. The key issues raised were limited access and adequacy of social benefits hampered by a complex arrangement of competences in relation to services across different governance levels. With Greece and Italy as the last countries introducing minimum income schemes, the Group agreed that the question going forward is to determine how people receiving minimum income are being supported by social services to promote their social inclusion. According to the Group, national plans for fighting poverty do not always take this into account and tend to focus only on income, despite evidence that social inclusion pathways need to account for finance support as well as access to quality services.

As the responsibility has been transferred locally, addressing homelessness is an increasingly important issue for social services. Homelessness has been increasing for a number of reasons including changes in benefits eligibility, but the duty to protect citizens from homelessness is not being adequately matched with financial resources. In addition, there is a lack of systematic data collection on homelessness. An integrated response for the social inclusion of homeless people is therefore needed.



Quality of social services

Limited accessibility and poor integration of services remain two of the main challenges in improving quality in social services. Issues related to workforce (such as a shortage of social workers, lack of adequate skills, low wages and excessive workload) are also negatively affecting the quality of social services. Funding remains a major concern as budget cuts continue to hit public services. While local social services have turned to integration and promoting innovation, these measures have not been sufficient to address significant cuts in finances which have been implemented over the past years.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the Group highlighted that standards are not sufficiently adapted to different types of services and target groups. Moreover, it is difficult to define how standards should be measured and inspected following the creation of new forms of social services. Finally, substantial administrative burdens on both local authorities and service providers continue to hinder the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation.



The responses from European Social Network (ESN) members to the country questionnaires provided a wealth of information about the social situation in their countries, and the activities of local public social services seeking to address a range of social issues.

Three key themes have been selected for ESN's cross-country analysis 2019:

1. Poverty and social protection
2. Housing and homelessness
3. Quality of social services

Each of these country key themes can be broken down into subcategories.

1. **Poverty and social protection** focuses on the quality of the integration of benefits and social services for different population groups: young people, children and families, people with disabilities, older people, as well as migrants and refugees.
2. **Housing and homelessness** addresses the number of homeless people, general trends in homelessness, how public authorities at local level have been given wider responsibility (not necessarily matched by additional funding), and some analytical information related to social housing access for vulnerable groups.
3. **Quality of social services** addresses the accessibility and coverage of social services, how well they are integrated with other services, the workforce situation in the sector, the funding of social services along with quality standards and monitoring systems.

For each of these themes and subcategories, we provide an overview of key messages and country specific examples. Countries which have developed along similar lines are listed in brackets (e.g. AT, BE, BG) so that readers interested in knowing more about them can examine the individual country profiles in the next session of the report.

1. Poverty and social protection

1.1 Young people

Members of the Group highlighted that precarious situations among young people remain a stress point that needs to be addressed. On the causes of precariousness, ESN members pointed to the lasting consequences of the economic and social crisis (e.g. EL, IE), unemployment (e.g. EE, EL, ES, HR, IE, IT, RO) and in-work poverty (e.g. EL, IT). Reference Group members from Ireland emphasised that between 2010 and 2015, the number of young people aged 15-24 in consistent poverty increased by 73%. In Italy, almost one fifth of young people (19.9%) are considered Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). In Romania, one million young people are also in this situation.

At the same time, some members drew attention to the lack of efficient and integrated social support (benefits and services) for young people (e.g. AT, IT, RO, UK). Members provided ideas to make improvements. For example, considering socio-economic factors when providing integrated social support, or improving outreach to young people in need of support (e.g. IT, LT).

Young people's challenges seem to have become a more important issue for national governments, as indicated by an increasing number of policy initiatives being put forward to tackle the problem. However, members of the Group highlighted that these policies are mainly based on 'activation', and aimed at getting the young unemployed into work or back into education or training (e.g. DK, EE, ES, HR, IT, LT, PL, PT, UK), sometimes at the expense of a more targeted and integrated approach (e.g. IT).

However, the Finnish member pointed to the role played by the Finnish 'One-Stop-Shop Guidance Centres for young people' (OHJAAMO). These centres have case managers and provide integrated employment, social and health services in more than fifty municipalities across Finland. In parallel to this broader approach, Sweden has developed a cooperation scheme between the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants and the Employment service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*). With regards to Latvia, Riga City Council highlighted in their questionnaire the "rather adequate and integrated social services (...) especially until adulthood". Since December 2017, these have been strengthened by government legislation aimed at enhancing cooperation between institutions working to protect children's rights. In Malta, social workers work closely with care services to support young people in need.

1.2 Children and families

Overall, the figures related to children at risk or living in poverty remain extremely worrying. This is especially true for Romania, where 49.2% of children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2016, the highest rate among EU Member States. Spanish members raised in their questionnaire the issue of 'structural child poverty', highlighting that "the constant increase in inequality has become hereditary poverty. The increase in poverty and unemployment, together with the worsening of working conditions and the social cuts of previous years have placed many Spanish children at risk of poverty and social exclusion".

At the same time, nearly all ESN members strongly emphasised that single-parent families were particularly vulnerable to social risks. Members also pointed to several national policies and pilot projects launched in the last four years to better address the needs of vulnerable families (e.g. CZ, DK, EE, FI). Denmark and Finland seem to be moving towards a more integrated approach, taking into account each family's situation as a whole. Malta representatives highlighted that "children and families social services deliver services in a holistic manner". Some ESN members described a serious need for improved cooperation between services stating that this would allow for a more holistic strategy which could better reach out to vulnerable families and have a more effective impact (e.g. EL, ES, FI, HR, LT, RO, UK).

At the same time, regional and institutional fragmentation in terms of lack of cooperation, infrastructure and service quality, remains a serious challenge raised by several ESN members (e.g. IT, LT, UK). In England, successive welfare reforms over the past ten years have caused a severe deterioration in the social situation of children, leading to an increase in poverty and in referrals to foodbanks. For example, youth services have been reduced by 69% and children's centres by 58%.

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) emphasised that the financial situation of children's services is unsustainable. While England appears to lack preventive and early help services, Scotland has been focusing on early years and prevention of trauma, leading to a more integrated system. This is a consequence of the devolution of some welfare competences to Scotland and a focus by the Scottish government on topping up some of the benefits provided to vulnerable people.

According to the Portuguese member, improving the quality of jobs in Portugal should be a political priority to improve the situation of vulnerable children and families. In this regard, it should be noted that salaries in some countries have improved, especially lower salaries. For instance, in Estonia, the Institute of Baltic Studies pointed to consistent progress in terms of family welfare policies, notably the revision of the Parental Leave Act in 2017, to increase the maximum pay for paternal leave and increase flexibility. At the same time, the government decided to further support multi-dimensional family therapy and the parenthood programme entitled 'Wonderful Years'. In Lithuania, the government is implementing a policy entitled 'Comprehensive Services for the Family', focusing on the organisation of coordinated support.

1.3 People with disabilities

One of the key challenges regarding people with disabilities remains employment, with some particularly worrying trends. For example, in Austria, the unemployment rate of people with disabilities increased by 140% between 2007 and 2017. In Lithuania, unofficial data suggest that, at best, only 5% of people with intellectual disabilities are working.

In contrast, Slovakia has seen an increase in the employment of people with disabilities, even though their inactivity rate remains very high.

Material deprivation, including severe material deprivation, and the aggregated risk of poverty or social exclusion of persons with disabilities, fell slightly in 2016.

Several ESN members highlighted policy initiatives put in place by Member States to better integrate people with disabilities into the labour market

(e.g. DK, EE, ES, IE, PT, SK, UK). For example, in Portugal, employment quotas for people with disabilities have been set for both the private and the public sector. However, the Association of Social Services Professionals (APSS) noted in their questionnaire that "the effective use of these quotas is still limited with negative consequences for the real inclusion of citizens with disabilities". As for Germany, the need to develop more projects aimed at better including people with disabilities in the German labour market was flagged by our Group member. Likewise, the Romanian member regretted that despite the very low integration of people with disabilities in the labour market, there are no policies aimed at developing their labour-related skills or improving the accessibility of public transport.

Some members of the Group pointed to the inadequacy and insufficiency of social services and allowances (e.g. AT, CZ, EE, EL, IT, LV, LT, RO) and expressed the need for better coordination between services and the various institutional levels (e.g. EL, HR, IT, LV, LT, RO, SK).

Progress has been made in the Czech Republic with the introduction in the Czech Civil Code of several measures to help people with disabilities access their rights in all areas of life. Significantly, in March 2018, Ireland signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, our Group members complained about lack of implementation, particularly when it comes to independent living. In Scotland, social services developed a 'Self-Directed Support' approach in 2014, paving the way for the establishment of 'personalised public services'. On another note, the Belgian member pointed to an increase in the number of people receiving disability allowance as a consequence of the ageing population and labour market developments.

1.4 Older People

Ageing populations are expected to constitute a serious challenge for social and health care in the upcoming years in most European countries (e.g. CZ, DK, FI, IT, PT, RO, UK). This is particularly true since older people are one of the most vulnerable groups when it comes to risk of poverty and social exclusion. Members of the Group noted that old-age poverty particularly affects women (e.g. AT, IE). Nearly all members of the Group strongly emphasised that older people living in isolation were particularly vulnerable to social risks.

Member States have begun to increase the minimum age of retirement and to encourage older people to stay longer in work (e.g. DK, EE, IE). Prevention policies will therefore be needed in order to keep older people healthy and mitigate growing pressure on social and health care systems (e.g. DE, DK, EE, FI). Portugal, which has one of the highest dependency ratios in the EU, has introduced additional benefits in order to top up low pension allowances.

At the same time, some members criticised the lack of equipment and/or workforce to provide qualitative long-term care and home care for older people in their countries (e.g. CZ, EE, ES, FI, HR, IT, LT, PT, RO). Lack of financial resources was another serious challenge raised by the National Council of Social Workers (CNOAS) in Italy. Moreover, social care is becoming a sort of a 'postcode lottery' depending on where the old person lives (e.g. ES, HR, IT).

Care for older people may heavily rely on relatives providing informal care (e.g. HR, EE, IT, PT, SL). These relatives may not be given the work flexibility to provide such care and may not be recognised or entitled to carer status (e.g. HR).

Malta, however, introduced a scheme in 2016 providing a yearly grant to older people employing a personal qualified carer. In 2015 in Scotland, the government introduced free personal and nursing care to all eligible over-65s living at home. Scotland meanwhile has made substantial progress through the 2014 Public Bodies Act. This led to an overhaul of the provision of health and social care for older people, allowing the development of more preventive and personalised support. In England, however, the number of older people receiving care decreased by approximately 4% in 2017 as a result of the 'highly targeted approach' of social services.

Tightening eligibility criteria has become a common trend. For example, Zagreb City Council expects that the 2017-2020 Croatian Social Welfare Strategy for older people will enhance their quality of life. However, they also pointed out that due to strict eligibility criteria most older people are not eligible for social care benefits.

Irish representatives highlighted the irrelevance of indicators used to measure poverty among older people. Referring to the material deprivation indicator defined by the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Irish member noted that "in older age, costs for health and long-term care and access to services are just as important as the ability to purchase or spend time on the basic items provided for in the material deprivation indicator".

1.5 Migrants and refugees

Unemployment among migrants remains a serious challenge (e.g. DK, FI, IT, MT). Several members of the Group mentioned policy strategies aimed at better integrating migrants and refugees into the labour market (e.g. DE, DK, EE). The Finnish member insisted on the need to develop a labour-based policy for migrants in Finland.

In Ireland, following a decision of the Irish Supreme Court in May 2017, the rights, entitlements and obligations for asylum seekers were set out in legislation brought in on July 6th 2018. Among the improvements achieved is the right for asylum seekers to work while their applications are being processed, in accordance with EU law. Portugal, for its part, introduced a new law on 5th July 2018 that contributed to an increase in demand for services by migrants, making it easier for foreign citizens to gain Portuguese nationality.

While employment seems to play a key role in national policies towards the social inclusion of migrants and refugees, there may be a need for more decentralisation in order to provide local social services with more autonomy so they can improve the support they provide to refugees (e.g. FI, HR, LV).

Croatia launched a comprehensive Action plan for the Integration of Persons Approved for International Protection (2017-2019). This should strengthen integration in various areas, such as social welfare and health care, temporary accommodation and housing, language learning and education. In parallel to this broad approach, the Estonian member noted that collaboration with NGOs and third sector organisations plays a key role in the integration and support of immigrants and refugees. The Estonian member also highlighted that even though social services are available for new migrants in Estonia, there is still poor coverage.

Public policies designed to help may also have unintended consequences. For instance, in 2016 the England government passed an Immigration Act preventing landlords and letting agents from renting housing to families without recourse to public funds. This led to an increase in homelessness among migrants and refugees, and added pressure on children's services.

2. Housing and homelessness

2.1 Homeless people: Numbers and trends

Most Member States do not carry out systematic censuses of homelessness (e.g. PT, SK). That being said, several ESN members reported an increase in the number of homeless people in recent years (e.g. AT, DK, IT, LV, NL) based on other sources¹. Between 2006 and 2016, the number of homeless people increased by one third in Austria while the Danish ESN member stressed that the increase in homelessness has particularly hit young people.

The Italian member highlighted that the economic crisis and the increase in housing costs per household has led to "an exponential increase of evictions". A similar situation exists in Spain where, according to the questionnaire, "the situation of the real estate market, the ability of families to access and maintain (in adequate conditions) housing has worsened in recent years, with insufficient public policies so far to guarantee the right of citizens to enjoy decent and adequate housing".

In Greece, the number of homeless people is expected to be stabilising and starting to decrease. However, it should be kept in mind that Greece, like Italy, imposes eligibility criteria for accessing emergency accommodation (e.g. to have no criminal convictions, to be legally in the country, to be able to provide identification, having disabling physical health problems or communicable diseases or skin diseases).

In contrast, Finland is one of the few European countries where homelessness is decreasing. This is partly because the Finnish state has launched and financed programmes aimed at tackling homelessness since the early 2000s. These pro-

grammes were not cut or altered during the 2008 economic recession. The strategy has been based on the Housing First principle and relies on cross-sectoral cooperation². In Lithuania, there is an improvement in housing indicators for the general population, as well as in the quality of housing, "especially in terms of sanitary conditions" as highlighted by ESN's member in their questionnaire responses.

2.2 Access to social housing for vulnerable groups

Members of the Group highlighted the inadequacy of available social housing in relation to demand (e.g. AT, BE, DK, EL, ES, FR, IT, LV, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK), though there are differences between countries. For instance, in France, the shortage of social housing seems mostly limited to bigger cities and to specific cases, such as people suffering from psychiatric conditions.

Another key issue in relation to access to social housing is the increase in housing prices, putting vulnerable households under pressure (e.g. BE, CZ, EE, LT, RO, SE, SK, NL, PT). This phenomenon is having a knock-on effect on social services, as explained by the Belgian members: "pressure on the housing market combined with recent migration, has pushed up the number of homeless people in the biggest cities. This resulted in extra pressure on social services in these cities". In addition to housing costs, eligibility criteria for social housing are sometimes too restrictive (e.g. LT, NL, PL, PT, SK). In this regard, the Dutch government stated that it will not increase the maximum income threshold to access social housing, despite a ruling of the Court of Justice of the EU.

Furthermore, complex and fragmented management of public housing is another obstacle in the fight against homelessness (e.g. CZ, IT, LT, LV). In Latvia, for example, the government has not agreed on a legal definition for the terms 'homeless' or 'housing'. Consequently, there is no national strategy for tackling homelessness.

In the Czech Republic social housing is not covered by any legislation either. This means that there is no definition of the target group eligible for this type of housing. In Estonia, there is no state provided social housing, so it is up to local authorities to decide how they provide housing support.

By contrast in Sweden, the public housing sector accounts for almost 20% of the total housing stock and 50% of the rental sector. However, despite this significant level of supply, the Swedish member highlighted that "83% of Swedish municipalities report a shortfall of living accommodation, with only 40 municipalities reporting a balance in supply and demand".

The Italian member described a very worrying situation which led the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies to issue in November 2015 a set of guidelines against serious adult marginalisation in Italy. Their objective is to foster social inclusion by developing a joint programme between the various institutions at all levels. Several stakeholders worked together to invest in innovative housing services and strategies, and to develop the First National Plan Against Poverty, with the support of the National Inclusion Programme (PON Inclusion) 2014-2020. In March 2019, Spain, which has the lowest rate of social housing in the EU, adopted a new rental law. This legislation

enhances the rights of tenants and is designed to prevent evictions.

The Maltese government also launched two significant housing projects. These aimed to create 1,700 new social housing units. For this reason, the Housing Authority is currently formulating a new social housing allocation policy which will promote and facilitate social mobility. At the same time, the Maltese authorities have begun a process that should lead to a new national housing system with new housing policies and legislation. According to the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (Malta) which answered the questionnaire, "the exploration of a wider and more practical understanding of the concept of affordability" is at the centre of this new approach.

In Portugal, national social security services have designed a new policy aimed at providing emergency housing. This means that every municipality will establish a 'Local Housing Strategy' with integrated services and coordinated with local strategies. Since 2016 the Slovakian government has allowed its municipalities to charge a 'local development fee' to be paid by each company or person constructing a building in a given area, so that the income generated is used for social housing.

Lastly, the vast majority of members of the Group praised the outputs of the Housing First programme (e.g. BE, DK, ES, FI, IT). Zagreb City Council highlighted the need to implement such a scheme in Croatia to tackle homelessness. However, Portugal noted that programmes such as Housing First are "being jeopardised by the (...) contraction of affordable rental alternatives and the lack of a social housing sector which could provide some alternatives".

3. Quality of social services

3.1 Accessibility and coverage

Fragmented social services systems resulting from geographical differences and lack of institutional cooperation result in wide variability in terms of coverage within nearly all Member States covered in this report. The Spanish members described the worrying extent of the issue this way: "the depopulation, the dispersion of municipalities, lack of efficient communication, the heterogeneity of the territory and aging in rural areas make it impossible to achieve the social welfare of citizens through the necessary mechanisms and instruments".

In 2017, Estonia carried out a reform of local government, reducing the number of local authorities from 213 to 79. This resulted in greater inequalities between localities in terms of social service capabilities and coverage. Meanwhile the Association of Directors of Social Services (Divosa) in the Netherlands highlighted that 60% of 'multi problem families' do not receive support for all the issues they are facing.

The Danish member highlighted that social services are delivered across the country through the municipalities. In Belgium, the accessibility and coverage of social services rely on a strong network of front-line social services delivered at the local level. Therefore, there is a need for better organised decentralisation and strengthened cooperation.

Lack of information, strict eligibility criteria and an insufficient number of social service providers may explain the shortfall in coverage by social services (e.g. CZ, HR, IT, RO). In some Member States there is a need for new equipment and infrastructure to allow social services to cope with demand (e.g. ES, EL, HR, IT, LV, RO).

In November 2018, the Estonian government announced the creation of 61 new health centres which, according to The Institute of Baltic Studies, are very much needed. In Portugal, likewise, one of the main issues is the lack of services. In England, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services highlighted that social services providers closing or handing back contracts is leading to 'care market failures' in some parts of the country

3.2 Integration with other services

Members of the Group pointed to a lack of cooperation and fragmentation of social services and other welfare related services, and described this as the major obstacle to integration (e.g. AT, CZ, EE, FR, EL, IT, BE, DE, ES, RO, UK, PL, SL). This issue is closely linked to the lack of coordination between the various institutional levels (e.g. BE, CZ, EE, DE, ES, RO, UK). In England, benefits policy and rates are mainly managed by the central UK government. Social services rely on the central UK government funding but are, for the most part, designed, delivered and controlled at national, regional or local level. As highlighted by the English member, this leads to a "highly complex patchwork of overlapping systems, with poor communication between components" resulting in serious obstacles to access social services, "sometimes preventing individuals from taking up benefits or support to which they are entitled". In addition, as the distribution of powers may be unclear at the various institutional levels in Member States, municipalities may end up confused about their role regarding the provision of social services (e.g. CZ).

However, the most obvious lack of integration seems to be between health and social services (eg. EE, IT, LV, SK). Noting 'enormous efforts' to coordinate social and health care, with poor results, the Italian member stressed the need for more public spending and stronger legislation, as well as better management and coordination by central government. In contrast Scotland, through the Public Bodies Act, has managed to enhance integration of social and health care, focusing on community-based and preventative care.

As an example of a broad collaboration to assist vulnerable individuals, Malta has developed strong cooperation between social services and the Housing Authority, the Water and Energy Agency, the Ministry for Education and Employment, Jobsplus, the Corradino Correctional Facility, local councils, the Department for Social Security, local banks and all government entities sharing ventures at various levels of social service operations.

Portugal also appears to be making progress in this regard, with a national programme implemented in every district aimed at strengthening coordination between municipalities by maximising the use of the existing resources for coordination. In Sweden meanwhile, social services already rely on a strong system of coordination and collaboration. The government, through the National Board of Health and Social Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) and the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), is developing a coordination system between the services working in the field of early stage, childhood and youth.

Denmark seems to enjoy quite an advanced integrated system although there is still room for improvement. This should be addressed with a new

broad and comprehensive policy. Finland has seen an improvement in service integration in recent years, although there is a need for more practical tools to make those improvements effective.

3.3 Workforce: training, numbers, wages and workload

Wages in the social service sector remain unattractive compared to other (private) sectors (e.g. AT, EE, FR, HR, IT, LV, PT, SK, UK), with sometimes considerable regional disparities (e.g. EE, HR, IT, LV, PT, SK, UK). Members of the Group also stressed the high turnover and severe risks of burnout due to work overload and understaffing which impact the quality of social services delivery (e.g. AT, ES, HR, IT, LV, PT, PL, RO, SK, UK).

The Lithuanian government has proposed a new set of policies to improve the quality of work in social services and to "raise the prestige of the profession, public trust in the employees and attract employees motivated and able to work as professionals both in cities and regions" according to the Lithuanian contributor. Among the improvements proposed are a reduction in the bureaucracy linked to social work and pay increases for social workers. In Portugal however, although wages are regulated, precarious work has been for some time a key challenge. This puts pressure on social services workers through "partial contracts, short period contracts, contracts without social security benefits". (Portuguese ESN contribution, 2019)

Another key issue to be addressed is the shortage within social services workforce. As the Danish member pointed out, ageing is a challenge for the social services workforce - the Association of Social Services Directors (FSD) has warned of a lack of skilled workers in the healthcare sector. The Finn-

ish member described an "imminent" shortage of skilled labour in social services. In Italy, a lack of funding is leading to the closure of social services offices, and to further gaps in the already insufficient coverage. According to the Italian member, the workforce shortage is likely to increase. In England the impact of Brexit on the social care workforce is still to be assessed, given that "8% of the social care workforce is from the EU". (English ESN contribution 2019)

As for the training of social services workers, the replies to the questionnaires revealed consistent disparities among Member States. The shortage of professional social workers may lead to an inadequately trained workforce (e.g. BE, EE, LV, PT, RO). For example, in Belgium the job of 'social assistant' is protected by the law and requires a specific degree. However, for other care roles working conditions are far more precarious. In Estonia, only one in five social welfare officers in local authorities have a high school degree. As for Romania, the lack of life-long training at national level and a shortage of qualified social workers in rural areas are the main obstacles to developing an adequate and sufficient workforce in the sector.

3.4 Funding: adequacy and sustainability

Members of the Group almost unanimously criticised the lack of funding in social services (e.g. AT, CZ, HR, EE, ES, FI, IE, IT, LV, LT, PT, RO, UK). Insufficient funding causes a vicious circle affecting every aspect of the sector. As stated by The Institute of Baltic Studies: "lack of funding in social services causes lack of specialists, problems in quality and accessibility of services". The Centre for Training and Assessment

in Social Work (Romania) also described a worrying situation, saying: "the budget for 2019 fails to guarantee the allocation, from the state budget, of the necessary funds to support child protection and social care for persons with disabilities. These developments can have serious consequences for the implementation of children's rights, with or without disabilities, and for adults with disabilities in Romania". In Scotland, austerity measures have significantly impacted social services and created "fierce competition" between groups eligible for social support.

Moreover, there is often regional variability in funding (e.g. CZ, ES, IT, RO). The Austrian Association of Social Workers (OBDS) stressed that the province administrations are not, for example, obliged to take collective agreements into account for their cost standard models. In Spain, the state continues to reduce the funding of social services, which are the responsibility of local or regional authorities.

APSS, the Association of Social Care Providers in the Czech Republic highlighted the unpredictability of funding and the lack of a uniform methodology for social services funding. In January 2018, Slovakia amended its Social Services Act, reforming the state subsidy scheme for providers of mobile and residential social services for older people and people with disabilities. Those subsidies are now based on the assessment of the degree of care dependency. Lastly, funding of social services in France does not seem to be the most burning issue. The problem appears to lie in the allocation of resources, i.e. not enough is spent on prevention and too much on various forms of social assistance.

3.5 Quality standards and monitoring system

Several members of the Group reported that the quality of social services is not measured, or not sufficiently so (e.g. AT, CZ, FR, FI, EL, IT, LV, LT, RO, SK, SL). The Greek and Italian members stressed that there is an urgent need to map all the sector's services in order to develop an overall picture. As noted by CNOAS, regional disparities make it difficult to have an overall assessment.

Estonia, however, does carry out monitoring. It has set out quality standards in the "EQUASS 2018 methodology" and the Estonian Social Services Quality Guide. These are designed to help develop a common understanding among all social service providers and service users. Estonia will enhance its monitoring and standard systems by publishing new quality guidelines.

Denmark, for its part, uses the ten social mobility goals designed by the Danish government in 2016 to measure the quality of social services. In Sweden, it is the responsibility of each municipality to monitor its services and carry out quality control. Legislation covers social services, health services, and provisions for persons with disabilities.

In Portugal social services are assessed regularly by the public services who are responsible for delivery. According to the Association of Social Services Professionals (APSS, Portugal): "in general, all kinds of social services have quantitative and qualitative requirements related with the workforce and basic rules should be followed".

4. Conclusions

The review of the answers submitted by members of the Group has helped to identify the most pressing issues faced by social services across Europe in relation to poverty and social protection, housing and homelessness, and quality of social services. Summing up, the following issues stand out.

With regard to poverty and social protection:

- **Young people** across the EU remain particularly vulnerable to social risks, i.e. precariousness, unemployment and in-work poverty (e.g. EE, EL, ES, HR, IE, IT, RO). "Activation" policies seem to be the currently favoured approach (e.g. DK, EE, ES, HR, IT, LT, PL, PT, UK).
- The overall figures related to **children** at risk or living in poverty remain worrying (e.g. ES, EL, IT, RO, UK). Nearly all members of the Group strongly emphasised that **single-parent families** were particularly vulnerable to social risks.
- Unemployment among **persons with disabilities** remains a key challenge. Several members of the Group highlighted national strategies to better integrate people with disabilities into the labour market (e.g. DK, EE, IE, ES, PT, SK, UK). However, the inadequacy and insufficiency of social services and allowances needs to be addressed (e.g. AT, CZ, EE, EL, IT, LV, LT, RO).
- The **ageing population** is expected to constitute a serious challenge for social services and health care in the upcoming years (e.g. DK, FI, IT, PT, RO, UK). Older people living in isolation are particularly vulnerable to social risks. Prevention policies will thus be urgently needed. Care for older people still relies heavily on informal care provided by relatives (e.g. EE, HR, IT, PT, SL). However, some ESN members criticised the lack of equipment such as computers, vehicles,

infrastructure and workforce to provide quality long-term care and home care (e.g. CZ, EE, ES, FI, HR, IT, LT, PT, RO).

- Unemployment among **migrants** needs to be tackled, although several members of the Group mentioned policy strategies aimed at better integrating migrants and refugees into the labour market (e.g. DE, DK, EE).

With regard to housing and homelessness:

- Nearly all members of the Group reported an **increase in homelessness** in recent years (e.g. AT, DK, IT, LV, NL). The inadequacy of available social housing, in relation to demand, has been highlighted as an important issue (e.g. AT, BE, DK, EL, IT, LV, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK, ES, SE).
- Another central challenge is that of **rising housing prices**, putting vulnerable households under pressure (e.g. BE, CZ, EE, LT, RO, SE, SK, NL, PT).

With regard to the quality of social services:

- Members of the Group pointed to a **lack of cooperation and fragmentation** of social services and other welfare services and described this as a major obstacle to integration. (e.g. AT, CZ, EE, FR, EL, IT, BE, DE, ES, RO, UK, PL, SL).
- **Wages in the social service** sector remain unattractive compared to the private sector (e.g. AT, HR, EE, FR, IT, LV, PT, SK, UK), with sometimes considerable regional disparities (e.g. HR, EE, IT, LV, PT, SK, UK). Members of the Group also stressed the high turnover and severe risks of burnout due to work overload and understaffing and how these impact the quality of care provided (e.g. AT, HR, IT, LV, PT, RO, SK, ES, UK, PL).

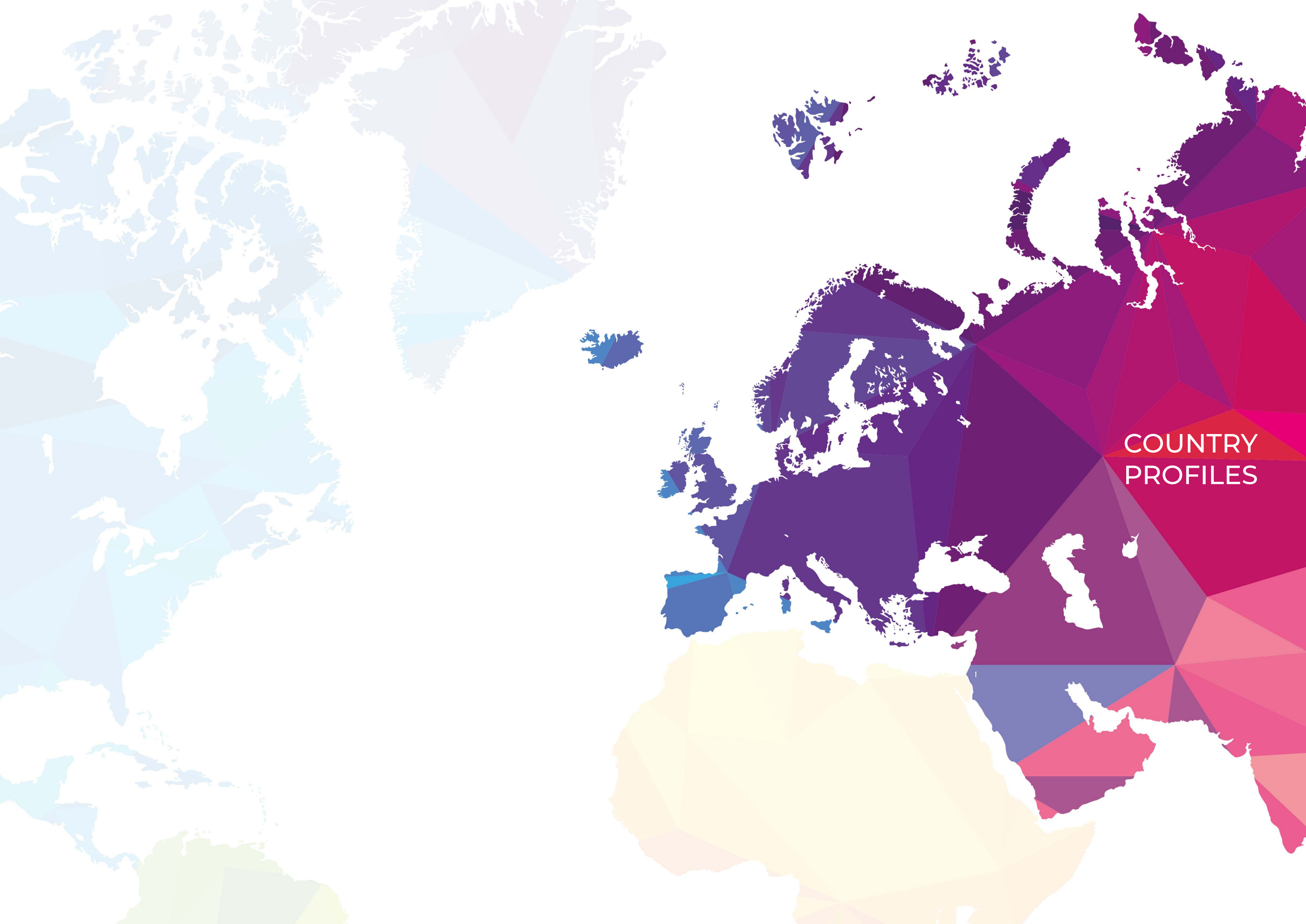
- Members of the Group almost unanimously highlighted **the lack of funding** of social services (e.g. AT, CZ, HR, EE, FI, IE, IT, LV, LT, PT, RO, ES, UK) as well as **regional differences** in funding (e.g. CZ, IT, RO, ES).

- As for quality monitoring, several members reported that the **quality of social services is not sufficiently measured** (e.g. AT, CZ, FR, FI, EL, IT, LV, LT, RO, SK, SL) as most of the evaluations are quantitative. They recommend more qualitative evaluations that include also feedback from people using services.

In conclusion, social services across Europe are faced with the impact of serious current challenges — ageing, migration, market pressure on housing costs — in parallel to the long-lasting consequences of the past socio-economic crisis. It is paramount to ensure that these services are adequately funded and sufficiently staffed to enable them to rise to these challenges, which are likely to put further pressure on them in the future.

At the same time, better coordinated and organised decentralisation will be vital to enable social services in Europe to adapt to and tackle these challenges. Regional disparities in coverage, cooperation and funding strongly impact the quality of social services, sometimes at the expense of the provision of support for the most vulnerable.

Members of the Group have made it clear that a policy which addresses social risks without integrating them into a broader, holistic approach, will fail to address the roots and causes of these social risks. Therefore, in addition to a more efficient and clearer division of institutional competences, there must be strengthened collaboration between the various services involved, and especially between health and social care services.



COUNTRY
PROFILES

AUSTRIA



Recommendation:

A return to a national system with clear federal competence for child protection is urgently required. The decision to abandon a legal regulation that is binding for all Austria and the shift in competence to the regional level could negatively impact quality standards and make recording of child protection cases difficult.

Poverty & Social Protection

Ongoing social reforms

The Social Assistance Reform introduced in June 2019 resulted in a reduction in financial transfers for parents and children in large families below the threshold recommended by EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC)¹ and just below the threshold of the reference budgets that is fixed at €600.

A reform on emergency support for unemployed people that the government intended to implement from 2020 has been postponed². The reform would have meant that unemployed people would be paid benefits for up to one year through the unemployment insurance system and transferred afterwards to social assistance. This may lead to some people having to use their assets to cover expenses, which in turn may result in a rise in poverty³.

Children and young people

There are 332,000 children and young people up to the age of 19 at risk of poverty⁴. The government passed a new reform reallocating the duty for child protection from the federal state (*Bundesebene*) to the provinces⁵. This move may contribute to deepening the fragmentation of responsibilities in the field of children's support. There is also growing concern about national child protection standards and numbers of children in child protection.



Increasing levels of unemployment for people with disabilities

As of June 2018, 25.5% of job seekers had a disability or health problems. Between June 2010 and June 2018, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities increased by 107%⁶. The unemployment rate of people with disabilities is at its highest level since the last statistical survey with an increase of 140%⁷. The budget for the employment agency decreased by almost 25% in 2019 to €1,051 billion causing the closure of facilities and the reduction of internship time to three months. One-year internships led to work placement rates of more than 90% while today's placement rates are between 25 and 35%.

Migrants and refugees

Approximately 2,880 asylum applications were submitted in Austria in the three months to March 2019. Since 2015, the number of applications has steadily declined as well as the number of migrants and refugees receiving social care, decreasing from 86,175 to 43,140 between 2015-2018⁸. The national government introduced minimum language skills as a requirement for asylum seekers. Under the requirement they would need to prove intermediate German or advanced English skills, or their benefits may be reduced by €300.

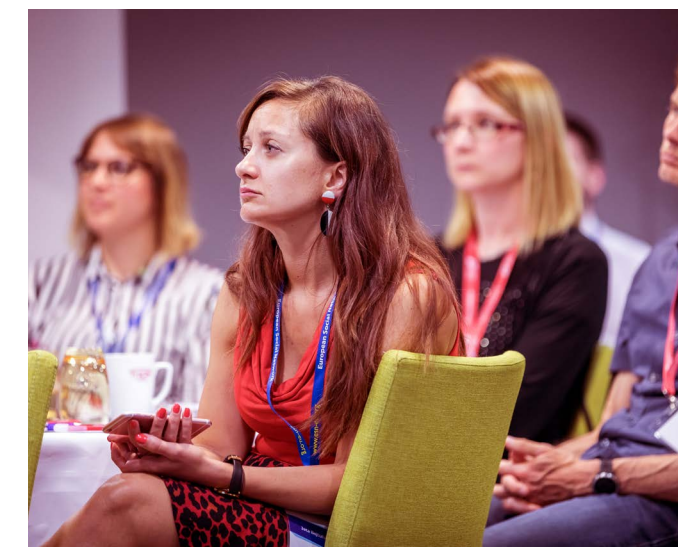
Quality of social services

There are still remarkable disparities regarding contributions from various agencies to the costs of social services, depending on the different legal regulations implemented by the nine federal states. Moreover, an adequate level of integration of services has not yet been reached in all federal states.

For example, in Tyrol, Vorarlberg, and Carinthia, integrated health and social services clusters (*Integrierte Sozial- und Gesundheitssprengel*) are used as platforms for coordinating the delivery of social services. However, apart from disability⁹ and youth welfare (case conferences are obligatory), there is no coordination in the other social assistance fields.

Despite a high level of statutory regulations on education, formal qualification and professional conduct, salaries for social workers are comparatively low within the services sector. These are accompanied by high risks of job turnover and burnout (the burnout rate in social services is the highest ever recorded¹⁰). The government has been looking at addressing this situation by promoting voluntary work in the field of social services, which is not necessarily a positive development when professional social workers are needed.

Quality of social services is currently not measured, except minimum professional standards in human resources management. Professional supervision is currently restricted to the compliance of legal standards only. Therefore, there should be binding frameworks regarding case numbers and quality checks.



BELGIUM



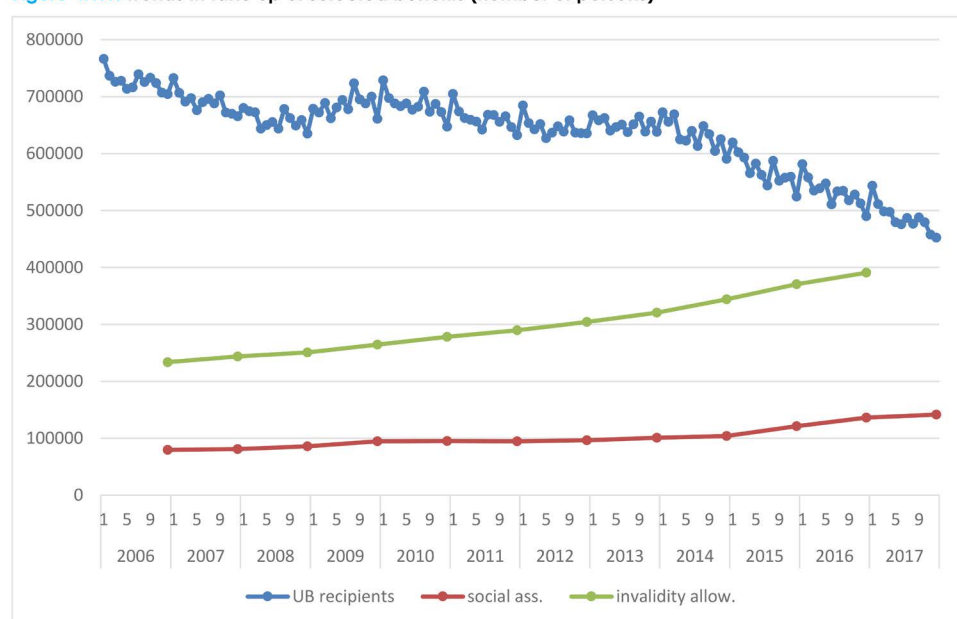
Recommendation:

An integrated approach is needed to tackle poverty. This should involve cooperation of stakeholders across different policy areas including NGOs, the private sector, and government in order to agree a shared strategic vision. This vision should focus specifically on raising the minimum income and the development of social housing to address high poverty rates which are worsened by a lack of access to affordable housing.

Poverty & Social Protection

There are contrasting trends in social protection. While there has been a drop in the number of people receiving unemployment benefits since 2014, there has also been a continued increase in recipients of disability and social assistance benefits¹. These trends have multiple causes, such as the ageing population resulting in fewer working age people eligible for unemployment benefits but also an increase in the number of frail older people likely to have a disability².

Figure 4.1.1. Trends in take up of selected benefits (number of persons)



Note: (1) Unemployment recipients: monthly number ; (2) invalidity allowances: number of recipients at December 31st; (3) social assistance benefits (RMI): monthly number of recipients.

Source: Unemployment Office (ONEM/RVA); Federal Service for social integration (POD MI/ SPP IS); Federal administration for sickness and invalidity insurance (INAMI/RIZIV)

The effectiveness of social protection in reducing poverty rates has increased for older persons, but has decreased for the working age population since 2005, from 56% to 43% in 2017³.

To combat poverty, civil society and EXELLO (the network of directors of social services in Flanders) have been calling for the minimum income to be raised above the poverty threshold. All political parties from the Dutch and French communities committed to realising this goal in March 2019⁴.

Housing & homelessness

House prices continue to rise⁵, becoming an ever more important contributor to poverty. In Ghent more than 40% of tenants spend over one third of their income on rent⁶. Social services increasingly concentrate on helping people find housing, which diverts attention and resources from other areas of their work⁷. People leaving institutional care because of deinstitutionalisation programmes are also at risk of becoming homeless because of a lack of support when moving to more independent living arrangements⁸.

Levels of social housing are low in Belgium, representing 6.5% of the total housing market⁹. Extremely long waiting lists are also common, and growing faster than the rate of new social housing construction¹⁰.

Different approaches are being tested to support homeless people. A Housing First experiment ran from September 2013 until June 2016 with 90% of the 378 participants living in adequate housing after two years¹¹. Since June 2016, the regions committed to expanding the Housing First model.

In Ghent a new model inspired by the Danish *Skæve Huse*¹² provides both housing and integrated support. This reflects a growing multi-disciplinary approach to working with homeless people who face complex problems.

Quality of social services

The Flemish Government is promoting coordination between various sectors and services through a 'local social policy' decree. It gives local authorities responsibility for coordinating relevant actors and stakeholders so that vulnerable people have improved access to social services. However, implementation is a challenge due to the complex structure of competences and financing of different services, and an absence of direct funding from the regional government for implementation of the decree.

Another initiative to encourage more integrated working in Flanders is the integration of social welfare centres within local authorities. Members of EXELLO already report that the joint planning of services and budgets is expected to improve efficiency and hopefully quality of social services. However, there are certain flaws in implementation according to EXELLO. Conflicting policies between the regional and federal level regarding the employment of civil servants (such as the financing of pensions) can result in higher costs when transferring staff from social welfare centres to local authorities. There are also different policies for managing personal data between social welfare centres and municipalities, which prevents data sharing on service users.

Table 1 Social Housing levels and Waiting Lists¹³

	Flanders		Wallonie		Brussels	
	Rented	Waiting list	Rented	Waiting list	Rented	Waiting list
2014	139.071	120.504	98.082	39.083	36.377	39.939
2015	140.516	117.681	97.802	38.628	36.248	43.345
2016	142.981	137.177	101.589	39.464	36.117	39.153



Recommendation:

Improve social services planning at local level by taking into consideration local needs. Social planning is currently designed at national level, and not enough support is provided to local communities to adequately respond to their specific needs.

Poverty & Social Protection

Social exclusion and poverty

Poverty is a significant and growing issue in Croatia. In 2017, 26.4% of people were at risk of poverty or social exclusion¹. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics data, 824,900 people were at risk of poverty in 2017 which was 0.5% higher than in 2016². Despite this, uptake of benefits is low. In 2017 there were only 84,930 beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum income, which represents 10.2% of those who theoretically could benefit. This shows that ability to access benefits, lack of awareness and information is an obstacle to tackling poverty and social exclusion³.

Young people

The 2014-2020 National Strategy Against Poverty and Social Exclusion places young people as one of the four groups most at risk. There is a high rate of youth unemployment and they are also depending on their parents support for longer. In 2018, the Inter-

national Labour Organisation (ILO) estimated that 13.5% of young people belonged to the NEET group⁴. The City of Zagreb highlights that in order to design the measures needed for this group, it is necessary to establish a methodology to identify and monitor the persons who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET.

Young people who come out of alternative care have been identified as being at a specific risk of social exclusion. After leaving care, many young people end up in homeless shelters. In one homeless shelter operated by Caritas, 21% of residents are young people who have left institutional care⁵.

Older people

In Croatia, people aged 65 or older are at the highest poverty risk rate (28.6%)⁶. According to the Ombudsman, the coverage of the housing assistance benefit for older people is not adequate: more than 11,500 beneficiaries should receive it, yet only 4,218 do. Access to this benefit is linked to income and there have been calls for the government to change

requirements and increase access to this benefit, but this has not happened yet. In order to prevent poverty for older people with no income at all, it is necessary to create a national scheme to provide sufficient resources to satisfy their basic life needs.

People with disabilities

According to data from the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy (MDOMSP), in March 2018 there were 67,532 beneficiaries of assistance and care and 26,936 beneficiaries of the personal disability benefit⁷. Between December 2017 and December 2018, there was a decrease of 9.2% in the number of registered unemployed people with disabilities in the country⁸. There have been a number of local initiatives to support people with disabilities. For instance, the City of Zagreb has issued a series of policy recommendations aimed at improving support for people with disabilities.

Housing & homelessness

Large towns⁹ and counties are required by law to provide funds for accommodation for the homeless in reception or homeless shelters. However, more than half of them do not do it, which means that the third sector must make this provision instead. In addition, there are many unrecorded homeless. There is a need for greater engagement by local and county authorities to implement measures providing support for homeless people.

Some projects are trying to improve the coordination of social, health care, education and employment services for homeless people. For example, in Zagreb the "ReStart" project aims to enable homeless people to access employment by providing support and advice and reducing administrative and legal obstacles to employment. EU funds accounted almost for HRK 1.5 million (€200,000), which represents 93% of the total cost¹⁰. Despite projects like this, representatives from the City of Zagreb agree with the Ombudsman that Croatia should prepare a national strategy on homelessness and a Protocol on support for homeless people.

Quality of social services

Access to services

In rural municipalities there are certain material support and services, but the problem is how well they cover the real needs of the population. Many material benefits are sometimes merely symbolic or provided once a year. Services also rely on unsustainable funding with unclear dynamics in terms of announcing project calls at local, regional or national level. It is difficult to reach people in need of care living in rural or island communities. There are also major spending disparities between regions. For example, the City of Zagreb spends €80 per resident while other regions such as Krapina-Zagorje spend far less¹¹.

Assessing quality

Since 2014, the Guidelines on Social Services (Official Gazette 143/2014) outline the standards for quality social services as well as measures for determining compliance with quality standards. There are seventeen quality standards that apply to all social services. Service providers need to carry out self-assessments and put in place improvement plans based on how well they do in comparison to the standards.

A recent study on the quality experience of public services in Slavonia (one of the poorest regions in Croatia) has indicated that although Croatia still lags behind in the European Quality of Governance Index, people in poverty tend to have a better perception of public services than expected. They are satisfied with most services, except for social centres and job centres which are rated lowest¹². In general, over 65% of people are satisfied with all aspects of quality of the social care system¹³.

CZECH REPUBLIC



Recommendation:

Review and pass the Act on Social Services, which is long overdue, and ensure that it allows for better coordination between services. A social worker charter that stipulates conditions for social work professionals across all sectors and facilities, and a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities of local authorities in social services provision is also recommended.

Poverty & Social Protection

The Czech Republic has long had comparatively low rates of poverty and social exclusion¹, albeit with significant variation across regions². Social transfers have a positive impact on the poverty rate³. The social protection system provides an important safety net.

Financial benefits

The social protection system for those at risk of poverty consists of a basic benefit for material needs (living allowance), an additional housing supplement, and an 'extraordinary' form of support for people who, due to lack of funds, have a serious health threat⁴. In the wake of economic growth and rising household incomes, the total benefits paid decreased by 27.9% between September 2017 and 2018. The 'extraordinary' allowance decreased the most (35%), followed by the living allowance that decreased by 30.5%, with the housing supplement falling by 21.9%.

Support for people with disabilities

There is a National Plan for Promoting Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, covering a

wide range of support including employment services, care and mobility allowances. A 2018 report on the implementation of the Plan found that 110 of its 138 measures had been met. However, progress has been slow in developing accessibility to public buildings and transport. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs failed to increase the coverage of services that allow people to remain in a family environment. Some services even decreased⁵.

Housing support

The number of people living in sub-standard housing has increased. Innovative projects have piloted integrated services for people with housing needs. However, to secure improvements it is necessary to regulate social housing to define competences and obligations and identify target groups.

Social services funding

Government efforts to tackle social exclusion and poverty fall under the 2014-2020 Social Inclusion Strategy. One of its objectives was to provide affordable, consistent and quality services for families, children and youth. Another was to ensure a sufficiently developed system of social services for the

needs of persons socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion responding to their individual needs.

As pointed out in the report on the strategy implementation, social services development has only been partially implemented. Two issues were highlighted in particular: short-term funding and significant regional disparities. The first issue is that the volume of financing for providers is set annually at the beginning of the year, making it particularly difficult for small organisations to plan in advance.

Underfunding is an issue too. The Association of Care Providers (APSS) and the Trade Union of Health and Welfare pointed to a CZK 3 billion gap in funding in 2019. A second issue is regional disparities. There is a lack of a uniform methodology, with each region using different criteria meaning that the conditions for funding provision vary significantly. These disparities were highlighted by the Supreme Audit Office in 2018⁶. For instance, the highest subsidy rate per sheltered housing bed was 208.4% higher in the most expensive county compared with the cheapest⁷. Similar funding provisions for the whole country could ensure service development and improve service access across the country.

Quality of social services

The strategy underpinning development in social services is the National Strategy for the Development of Social Services 2016-2025, which includes measures from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to develop the quality of social services. This includes increasing support for informal carers, staff and material standards, adequate financing and a legislative definition of quality requirements. However, according to the Supreme Audit Office⁸, only 3 of the 17 measures have been achieved so far.

Social services improvement

Social service providers are subject to inspections from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, making sure they fulfill the legal obligations of the Social Services Act. However, providers report that in practice, inspections emphasise formal compliance and encourage addressing procedures in writing,

rather than assessing the actual quality of their work with clients. Non-profit organisations also highlight ongoing formalisation and bureaucratisation, meaning an increase in administrative written tasks, which have no actual impact on the quality of the service.

In addition to the failure to meet strategic goals, there are not enough older people's services and there is no strategy to ensure investment and capacity building. As in other European countries, the Czech Republic faces a demographic challenge because by 2050, a third of the population is predicted to be over 65⁹. The country has a below-average number of beds in long-term care facilities – just 41 per 1,000 inhabitants. According to APSS, the lack of social services has led to the appearance of approximately 60-70 illegal providers of services, which are of dubious quality. To develop older people services more funding would be required, but APSS considers that government financing should maintain services rather than expand them.

A major obstacle to the integration of services is the fragmentation of provision. Social service legislation distinguishes between 33 types of social services in 20 different facilities. Nationally, there are around 2,000 providers and 5,600 registered services. Providers must register each of the services that they provide, apply for funding for each service and monitor every service grant separately. As there is no clearly defined duty for local authorities to coordinate social services, integrated case management is rare. However, thanks to EU funding, some integrated services have emerged, such as integrated social inclusion and social housing programmes in the city of Ostrava.

Workforce shortage

A further issue in improving the quality of social services is the shortage of staff. Despite an overall increase in wages in 2018 and low unemployment, social workers earn significantly less than professionals in other sectors. For instance, in 2016, practitioners in private residential care earned 68% of the average gross monthly wage of practitioners in public services¹⁰.

DENMARK



Recommendation:

National government should review national funding for social services. Social services have been under pressure because of increased expenditure as more people access support. However, as municipalities have had their budgets reduced, the support experienced by individuals has been reduced, too. Limitations have led to pressure particularly in small municipalities.

Poverty & Social Protection

Young people

There is currently a focus in Denmark to ensure young people access education and employment. One way this is done is by providing a relatively low social security benefit called Education Help to motivate young people to pursue education and get a job. At the moment, development in this area is positive as the number of people on Education Help is slowly decreasing¹ while the education levels of young people in Denmark are increasing².

Children and families

In recent years, legislation on children and families has become stricter to prevent citizens from falling through the safety net. As part of this, a permanent task force was established to offer guidance and knowledge to the municipalities on case management of vulnerable children. For instance, municipalities have been supporting young people with parents of non-EU origin who may be less familiar with the education system and struggle to integrate. Incoming legislation on One Plan for citizens and families with complex problems will complement the 2011 Child Reform³, currently in place. This legislation will make it possible to draw up one holistic plan, (instead of several plans) that would include areas such as employment, social services,

migrant inclusion for citizens with several complex issues, and case management coordination.

Older people

An aging population and increasing life expectancy are considered major challenges as they have been leading to an increase in the age range of 80+⁴. To address this, work is being done to find new ways to support older people, including making older people more self-sufficient through technological solutions and involving civil society/NGOs. Preventive efforts to keep older people healthy are also being carried out. An example is Tele-monitoring for older people with heart problems at home so that they become more self-sufficient.

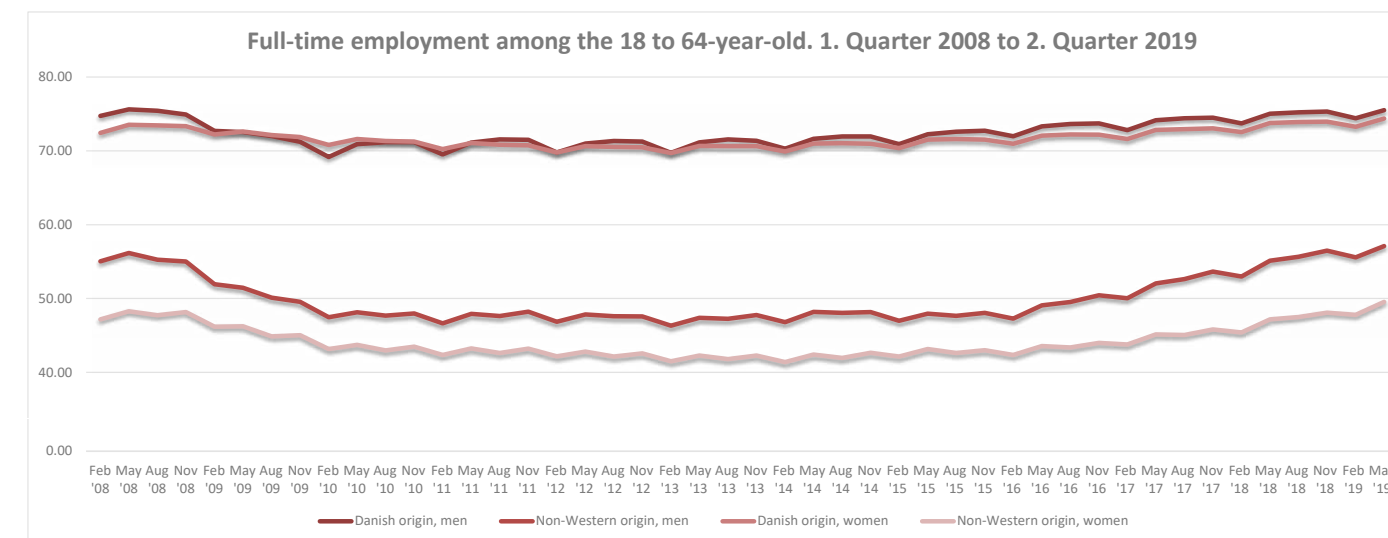
A way to reduce the old age dependency ratio and its economic consequences is to encourage people who are older than 65 to remain longer in the labour market. The Ministry of Employment has set up an older people think tank to discuss ways of helping older people have a better working life and postpone retirement. A report⁵ by the NGO DanAge Association shows a decrease in the number of older people receiving support at home for practical tasks, such as cleaning, from 43% in 2007 to 25% in 2017. However, this is most likely due to the fact that qualifications for the provision of home care have become stricter and because of budget and service cuts.

Migrants and refugees

There is still a significant employment gap between those of Danish origin and those with a migrant background. The employment rate among 25 - 64 year-olds migrants and descendants of non-western origin (men) rose to 56% in 2018 (see Table 1)⁶ compared to the previous years. Since the largest increase has taken place among men, ministerial efforts in 2020 will focus on bringing more female migrants and refugees into employment⁷.

New research⁸ shows that supporting young people in vulnerable environments to obtain and maintain a job after school helps them develop and provides additional social and vocational skills. One study concluded that 25-year olds with a non-Western background have 40% higher probability of being in employment if they have had a part time job after school⁹.

Table 1: Full-time employment among the 18 to 64 year-olds.



Housing & Homelessness

The importance of providing affordable housing is a major political issue in Denmark as the lack of availability is contributing to an increase in homelessness, especially for young people. 6,635 people were identified as homeless in 2017, an increase of 8% compared with 2015¹⁰. Social services in the municipalities play a key role in preventing evictions through early identification of risks and follow-up support. Municipalities have a close collaboration with housing associations and NGOs involved in homelessness to identify homeless people.

Quality of Social Services

Workforce

Denmark has a well-trained workforce and the levels of pay overall are adequate to recruit and retain skilled workers. However, in the light of the approaching old age dependency ratio, it is expected that there will be future recruitment problems. A governmental survey from December 2018 already

shows an incipient lack of nurses and other health-care workers¹¹. The latest analysis from the labour agency in 2019 shows the following unsuccessful recruitment rates: social and health service assistants 27%, nurses 21%, doctors 17%, social workers 16%¹². It is necessary to think of new and alternative initiatives to recruit skilled social services workers. A suggestion from the Association of Social Services Directors (FSD) is to create after-school jobs in care homes to promote the profession to young people.

Quality standards and measurements

Social services quality is measured by the ten social mobility goals developed by the government in 2016 across all 98 municipalities¹³. These ten goals do not provide consistent target figures but set the direction for the level of social services needed. At present, the Association of Danish Municipalities (*Kommunernes Landsforening*) is able to measure seven out of ten mobility goals at municipality level. Although three of the goals cannot be measured at local level yet, there is a strong commitment in Denmark to the achievement of the goals.



Recommendation:

Improve access to appropriate and affordable housing for older people and single parents, because among older people and single parents the poverty rates are higher and securing affordable accommodation is a key step to inclusion.

Poverty & Social Protection

People at risk of poverty

According to Statistics Estonia, 22.6% of the Estonian population lived at risk of poverty in 2017¹. The percentage of people at risk of poverty increased by 1.6 % compared to 2016². The at-risk-of-poverty rate decreased among children and among young people but increased among older people from 41% to 47.5%. In 2017, the at-risk-poverty rate before social transfers among people aged 65+ including pensions was 82.1 %, and excluding pensions was 49.8%³.

Children and families

Estonia has generous parental leave benefits entitling parents to an amount equal to their previous salary for 435 days. However, the system, in place since 2004, has changed several times due to its rigidity and negative impact on women's labour market participation as it may decrease the potential to find a job after parental leave and therefore lead to poverty. In spring 2017, the government modified parental leave legislation with three objectives:

- Increase maximum paid paternal leave
- Increase flexibility by extending up to three years the period when parents can use the entitled 435 days of leave
- Encourage employment during parental leave by increasing the monthly wage that a parent can earn without losing parental benefits from €470 to €1,544.

In spring 2018, the government decided to allocate €4.4 million over the next four years to the Evidence-Based Parenthood Programme: 'Incredible Years'⁴. This programme trains parents of children aged 2 to 8 who want to prevent children's behavioural problems, improve coping with family disputes, or who have children with first behavioural disorders⁵. With the additional funding allocated, the number of parents with children aged 2 to 8 who can take part in the programme will approximately double, and more local authorities can build these services. Ida-Viru, a region with lower than average social welfare provision, was also allocated extra-funding.

Long-term care services

Lack of access to affordable and good quality social services for older people remains a challenge. In 2016, 39.6 % of people reported an unmet need for homecare services due to financial reasons, which is among the highest rates in the EU, which averages 32.2 %⁶. The average monthly cost for long-term care home services was between €600 and €700 in December 2018⁷. In addition to low accessibility, long-term care facilities are lacking treatment schemes, and there is not good coordination between primary healthcare and general practitioners and social care facilities for older people⁸. There are also many other problems related to the quality of long-term care. For instance, living conditions have been described in the press as "not worth living" and the quality of services is often heavily criticised as staff are underpaid and overloaded⁹.

In September 2018, several institutions¹⁰ signed an agreement to create a dementia competence centre which aims to raise awareness of dementia among people with first signs, relatives, service providers, authorities and society at large. From January 2019, one of their first services, the Open Dementia Information Line, was launched to advise people diagnosed with dementia and their relatives, as well as service providers¹¹. At the end of 2018 an open call for proposals was launched for projects to improve the safety, support and wellbeing of people with dementia in general care. In March 2019, as a result of the call, a total of 38 applications were submitted for funding totalling €2.2 million. Nursing homes want to adapt nearly 1,000 places in their facilities, including more than 200 new places for accommodating people with dementia¹².

Quality of social services

Since 2018, the European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) 2018 methodology¹³ and Estonian Social Services Quality Guide¹⁴ are applied as a basis for developing common understanding on quality among all social service providers and people using services. The guide describes quality principles that extend to all social services, helping them to provide and develop quality services. Social service providers should implement the following generally accepted quality principles when they provide social services:

- Person-centred
- Results-oriented
- Needs-based approach
- Comprehensive approach
- Protection of the person's rights
- Inclusion (of the person, the relatives and other service providers)
- Employee' competences and ethics
- Good work organisation and good quality of management in the organisation.

Accessibility of services

The regional socio-economic disparities are large and can be mainly explained through an urban/rural division. Local authorities have a duty to provide social services to vulnerable population groups. However, regional disparities affect their capacity to do so. In particular, local authorities in remote areas face the challenges of ensuring accessibility, efficiency and quality of public services. The 2017 Local Government Reform¹⁵, which merged small municipalities and led to a reduction of 79 (from 213) has been an important step towards improving Estonia's local authorities' administrative capacity as resources are more centralised and there is an opportunity to have more specialised services. However, the mismatch between budgetary resources and responsibilities at different levels of government have hindered the provision of accessible and quality services as recognised by the Commission in its country report.

FINLAND



Recommendation:

A realistic and executable road map of structural reform of social and health care should be designed to reach a sustainable cost for social and health care. The reform of social and health care structures started 13 years ago and has not been approved yet. The lack of a reform is negatively impacting organisations responsible for social and health care.

Poverty & Social Protection

Follow up to the Basic Income Experiment

Finland, the world's happiest country according to the United Nations in 2018¹, is exploring alternatives to its social security model to respond to changes in the labour market and simplify the welfare benefits system. In 2017-2018, a basic income experiment was conducted to study its effects on employment. During the trial, a total of 2,000 unemployed persons aged 25 to 58 received a monthly payment of €560, unconditionally and without means testing.

The first results of the test were published on 8 February 2019 and concluded that based on an analysis of registered data, recipients of the basic income were no better or worse than the control group in finding employment during the first year of the experiment². However, the survey found that recipients of a basic income perceived their wellbeing at the end of the experiment as being better than the wellbeing of the control group. Recipients had fewer stress symptoms, fewer difficulties concentrating, and fewer health problems than the

control group. Building up on this experiment, the new government decided to continue testing new forms of social protection and is currently planning a new negative-income-tax trial³.

Children's services

Services for children, young people and families in Finland have been fragmented and did not always manage to take into account the overarching family situation. Services for children and families were therefore reformed in 2016–2018 through the implementation of a project called LAPE⁴. The objective was to transform services into an integrated system that responds better to the needs of children and families. Basic services have been strengthened and the focus has shifted towards prevention services and early support.

Each Finnish county appointed a person responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the programme are met. These experts will continue their work until the end of 2019. The LAPE programme focused on four areas which were developed through county-level pilot projects⁵:

- Creation of a family centre to coordinate health, education and social services aimed at supporting vulnerable families
- Development of specialised services and to effectively coordinate them with basic services
- Strengthen the role of children in all planning and decision-making based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Reinforce early childhood education.

Long-term care services

Finland faces challenges linked to the ageing of its population. The health and social care reform initiated by the government aimed to create seamless service chains for the provision of key social welfare and healthcare services. With the reform, health and social services were going to be transferred from the municipalities to the counties. However, the Finnish government failed to secure a positive vote in the Parliament for this reform, caused by the government resignation just before the final vote.

Housing and homelessness

Over 60% of Finland's homeless people live in Helsinki Metropolitan Area where most housing stock consists of owner-occupied apartments, which not everyone can afford. Similarly, the structure of the housing stock does not always meet people's needs. In the metropolitan area in particular, homes being constructed are too large and too expensive⁶. In order to reduce homelessness, Finland is implementing the successful Housing First model across its territory. One of the most significant ways in which Housing First has improved the lives of homeless people is by replacing shelters with more permanent living arrangements. For example, in Helsinki there were 600 beds in hostels and shelters in 2008⁷. In 2016, there was only one service centre with 52 beds for emergency use whereas other centres have been transformed into supported housing units, like for example *Alppikatu 25* shelter⁸.

Quality of social services

Coordination of services

The Guidance Centre is a place where anyone under the age of 30 may receive help free of charge in matters related to work, education, training or everyday life. There are currently 45 Guidance Centres across Finland in almost 100 municipalities. Career guidance officers, case managers and social welfare and health care professionals are among those who work at Guidance Centres⁹. These centres are a positive example of coordination of services for young people with the main goal of bringing multi-dimensional services as near as possible to the young people who may need them. This is called the '*Ohjaamo*' model and has also received promising feedback from the users of the service themselves.

The quality of services for older people is under intense discussion because of reported quality problems in home care and long-term-care (LTC) facilities. As part of the national social and health care reform, a national evaluation unit produced a county-based evaluation of social and health care services which concluded that to improve the quality of LTC services, there is a need to invest more in community services and the development of assistive technologies¹⁰.



FRANCE



Recommendation:

Engage in a systematic policy of impact measurement, in particular in the field of child protection where the efficiency of social measures is largely unknown. Most policies are not properly assessed and there is little or no impact measurement. This makes it difficult for county councils to choose the best methodologies for social interventions.

Poverty & Social Protection

Fight against poverty

At the end of 2018, the national government issued a three-year plan¹ to improve social inclusion. According to the Association of Directors of Social Services (ANDASS), the plan is an important development for the French welfare system, especially for children, and has an important funding allocation of €8.5 billion. However, there are a few elements that could be improved.

First, the governance of the plan is done at regional level, whereas social services mostly depend on public and private stakeholders that operate at county (*département*) level. Social welfare in France is not a regional level competence. As a result, the implementation of the plan is likely to lack integration, coherence and relevance. ANDASS strongly recommends that the governance of the plan be assigned to the counties instead.

Second, a large budget (although the exact figure has not been released yet) is to be allocated to active labour market policies consisting of subsidised jobs in dedicated associations (*Ateliers et chantiers d'insertion* - ACI). ACI have a high individual cost of €40,000 per beneficiary and have never been subject to a proper evaluation of their effectiveness.

Third, despite the creation of a scientific committee, there is still no budget allocated to research and evaluation. Most operations financed through the Plan have little or no impact measurement linked to them. ANDASS recommends that at least 0.1% (€7,5 million) of the plan's budget is allocated to research and evaluation.

Housing and homelessness

French legislation includes an enforceable right to housing. As a result, vulnerable people are generally able to access social housing. However, this is not the case for undocumented migrants who are only entitled to emergency accommodation in winter. Homeless people also have difficulties accessing accommodation due to high demands and long waiting lists.

In addition, there is a lack of specialised facilities for homeless people with mental health problems.

There are innovative integrated support programmes for homeless people to help them be included back in society, such as the Convergence Programme², paid for by a combination of public and private funding including the European Social Fund. The programme has implemented integrated and personalised services for homeless people with encouraging outcomes. The programme consists of a job integration pathway of a total duration of five years in four separate dedicated associations (ACI – see above). There is an educator to support people with administrative procedures or access to health care, and a canteen to serve hot meals to all employees. Another important feature of the project is the coordinated support provided by all professionals, including social workers, around the specific needs of individuals³.

The programme also offers extended support after employment and/or sustainable housing. The programme underwent a first evaluation in 2018. The main outcomes were:

- Employment: increase in the exit rates (47% in 2017 vs. 14% in 2012) with the situation remaining stable 6 months after exit
- Housing: access to permanent housing for 50% of the employees who left the programme with the situation remaining stable 6 months after exit
- Health: better health care for 3 out of 4 beneficiaries⁴.

Quality of social services

Workforce

There is an adequate number of social workers. However, levels of pay are low and not attractive. A trained social worker (bachelor's degree) typically starts their career with a net pay of €1,400 per

month. Over recent decades, salaries in the public sector increased less than inflation, unlike in the private sector. As a result, fewer people are attracted to the profession and it is becoming harder to attract enough young professionals to offset those who retire.

The Directorate General for Social Cohesion in the French government launched a study earlier this year to better respond to the challenges of developing and improving social work by the year 2030⁵. This study will support actions undertaken in the framework of the strategy to prevent and fight poverty and will help to define social professions by 2030 in order to better respond to the changing needs of the population. The results of the study will be available by the end of 2019.

Funding

Funding is available but should be invested more on preventative measures rather than social assistance⁶, especially in child protection where there is no primary prevention policy⁷. In 2018, funding for social assistance at county level was positive overall. However, the situation could change in the coming years because no plan has been developed to respond to the growing needs of an ageing society and the implementation of the plan to fight poverty⁸.

Evaluation and monitoring

Although the adequacy of local social services is measured through a comprehensive set of reporting mechanisms, these are not always consolidated at national level. Measurements refer to processes while the impact is almost never measured or even estimated. In general, there are no national frameworks, except for people with disabilities for which a nationally harmonised information system is being built⁹.

GERMANY



Recommendation:

To increase and improve municipalities' early childhood education and care services, German regions (*Bundesländer*) should use the new federal government grants to prioritise quality of services and extend coverage.

Poverty & Social Protection

Children

In Germany, the federal government is currently implementing a new law¹ on child benefits and minimum income for families with children. It aims to help low-income families improve the life-chances of their children through measures increasing the level of benefits and lowering thresholds to access them. While the German Association for Public and Private Welfare supports the aims of the initiative, it does not consider that these measures and the increased financial benefits are enough to sufficiently improve the situation of children in all families, because not all families benefit from all these new measures, especially from participation in education, sports, or music activities². There is a need for better monitoring of benefits take-up and a pro-active approach to improve benefits take-up rates.

People with disabilities

People with disabilities are at a higher risk of poverty (around 20%) than the average German citizen (around 15%)³. The Sixth National Report on Poverty

and Wealth⁴ (due to be published in 2020) will provide in-depth information on the effects of disability on participation in society. The German Association argues that stronger enforcement of the law SGB IX⁵ is required to help alleviate poverty for people with disabilities⁶. This should lead to the implementation of more projects employing people with severe disabilities who receive minimum income support, for around 15 hours per week. This would result in more persons having access to employment according to their respective abilities and earning 'additional income'.

Migrants and refugees

Currently, the federal government implements plans to provide better regulation of work permits and right of residence for those asylum seekers and refugees who have not been granted asylum or refugee status but cannot be extradited to their countries of origin⁷. The German Association is in favour of granting those who can get a contract for vocational training (usually three years) a guaranteed phase of five years for training and two years of work experience⁸. This will help them earn an adequate income

instead of relying on minimum income benefits, and also their employers who are often not able to find suitable candidates for vocational training, due to demographic changes in Germany.

Housing & Homelessness

Traditionally, the German housing market has been dominated by rented accommodation, especially in cities and for lower income groups. However, in recent years the housing and rent situation has become strained, as shown by the latest federal government report on housing allowance and rents⁹. Lower income households (below €1,300/month) need to spend almost half of their income on rent. About 10% of German households receive public assistance with renting costs (through housing benefits or minimum income benefits). Public housing cannot keep up with demand, especially for vulnerable groups and in large cities. A number of initiatives seek to improve the situation by building more homes, slowing the rise of rents and raising the level of housing benefits from 2020¹⁰.

Approximately 650,000 persons per year are affected by homelessness, according to the latest estimates by *BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe*, the national civil society umbrella organisation¹¹ (figures for 2017). This includes 375,000 persons with confirmed refugee status. About 48,000 persons are living in the streets of large cities. About half of these are EU citizens. These estimates rely on regional statistics and civil society estimates. However, the federal government is currently considering legislation for national statistics provided by the Federal Statistical Office¹².

Quality of social services

Geographical differences

In Germany, social benefits and social services are regulated both at federal and regional level. The municipalities are responsible for the

provision and delivery of social services, which rely on financing and regulation by the German regions (*Bundesländer*), resulting in a considerable degree of variance in relation to accessibility, coverage, take-up, coordination, staffing, funding and quality management systems. This variance is in line with the overall inequality of living conditions across regions¹³, which a new federal government initiative¹⁴ is seeking to address.

Early childhood education and care services are an important part of local social services, either provided by the municipalities or by independent providers. The federal government is currently working to increase and improve these services through new legislation¹⁵, providing regional governments with federal grants to improve local service provision. The German Association is in favour of prioritising the spending of these grants to improve quality (e.g. by employing more staff, having smaller groups) and extend coverage (e.g. by offering longer hours, taking on more children) rather than lowering and ultimately eliminating the monetary contributions of (better off) parents¹⁶.

Workforce

Workforce development is essential for quality delivery of local social services. Early childhood education and care services are in increasing demand with German families. According to current estimates, there will be shortage of around 191,000 qualified pedagogical staff by the year 2025¹⁷. To improve the workforce situation, the federal government has started an initiative to help regions and municipalities to recruit more staff by making the qualification process and working conditions more attractive¹⁸.

The same problems of staff shortages are faced by municipalities in the provision of long-term care¹⁹. A joint initiative by the ministries of health, older people and employment and social security aims at improving the number of staff by raising pay levels, staffing levels, number of trainees, training capacities of schools, attracting staff from abroad and increasing the use of digital solutions²⁰.

GREECE



Recommendation:

Design and implement specific measures to fight child poverty and in-work poverty to reduce high levels of poverty among these two target populations. According to available data, there is a higher number of children in poverty in large families. In addition, single parents or single-income earning households with children are at higher risk of poverty.

Poverty & Social Protection

Lower rates of people at-risk-of-poverty

Greece was the EU Member State most affected by the financial crisis, and the country was totally unprepared to meet the increasing needs of the population. The national social protection model was strongly fragmented and public spending was heavily concentrated on public servants' salaries and state pensions. The benefits system is still highly fragmented with more than 200 often small and poorly targeted benefits. In its current shape, Greece's social welfare system is only playing a limited role in poverty reduction and is unable to provide a much-needed social safety net to the country's most vulnerable.

According to the 2017 Survey on Income and Living Conditions¹, 20.2% of the total population was at risk of poverty, 3% less than in 2013². However, comparison of poverty rates before and after social transfers shows that central state redistribution is ineffective in reducing poverty. A 2017 Eurostat survey showed that Greece is the country in the EU

where social transfers are less effective in reducing the percentage of people at risk of poverty³.

During the crisis, several programmes were developed with the aim of confronting poverty and social exclusion. The Fund for the European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) has been running since 2016 with an aim to provide material (e.g. food) and non-material aid to the most vulnerable populations. In 2017, 8,380 tons of food were distributed to 263,976 persons and material support worth €3 million was distributed to 194,975 people. The programme 'Social Structures Confronting Poverty' has also been implemented providing groceries and access to public kitchens. In addition, 'Social Pharmacies' were developed by local authorities with 262 such structures operating in the 13 administrative regions of the country and which will continue to operate at least until 2020/21.

In 2017, Greece introduced a minimum income scheme (the Social Solidarity Income - SSI)⁴. As an example, income for a single person's household is €200/month. For each additional adult member in

the household, there is an increase of €100/month, and €50/month per child. This subsidy is means-tested and targeted only at households living in extreme poverty. Beneficiaries⁵ qualify for three forms of support: income support, access to social services and goods, and labour-market integration measures. Note that SSI is also associated with a range of social services, facilities and goods. The government also implemented a series of temporary means-tested schemes targeted at those most in need. These include an electricity subsidy, a rental allowance programme⁶ and a cash transfer programme to enable beneficiaries to purchase food. However, as of now there is no clear picture concerning the profile of the beneficiaries or the effectiveness of the implemented measures.

People who are eligible for SSI are also eligible for social services at local level via the newly created Community Centres⁷. Community Centres were created in each Greek municipality in 2016 and are funded via the European Social Fund (ESF). Different services are available in Community Centres, such as counselling, psycho-social and employment support. About 200 Community Centres (to be increased to 240) will be at the core of an information network, the National Mechanism for Integration and Social Cohesion.

Housing & Homelessness

Increasing homelessness has been directly linked to the 2008 socio-economic crisis. There is no official homelessness data-collection. According to estimates, more than 20,000 people in 2011 were homeless or lived in poor housing conditions⁸. The biggest concentrations were observed in large urban centres, like Athens and Thessaloniki, where housing prices are higher. Before the crisis, ownership rates were particularly high in Greece - 80% of people owned their home. The situation changed dramatically after the crisis and in 2009 the housing market collapsed⁹. Until recently, there were no plans for social housing reforms, even though a

high number of people are unable to meet their housing needs through the private market (particularly pensioners, long term unemployed, over-indebted households and welfare claimants).

Quality of social services

In Greece, the social services system relies heavily on informal networks and the family in order to provide support to those in need. The Greek social welfare system has evolved for decades without any clear strategy, resulting in a highly complex, fragmented, duplicated and inefficient system. Reforms have been undertaken but they have been fragmented and unfinished, and have fallen significantly short of what is needed to put the social welfare system on a sound footing.

Therefore, social services are characterised by:

- Inability to secure adequate human and economic resources to cover the needs of all vulnerable social groups
- Lack of uniform geographic development of basic social services
- Limited contribution by local authorities to the provision of care services and inclusion policies
- Absence of coordination of social service providers with other areas of the social protection system (employment, health, education),

Note that the SSI scheme has since its inception been designed around three pillars: income support; social inclusion; and labour market integration and reintegration. With respect to the second pillar, a network of Community Centres has been established with the support of the European Social Fund, expanding the provision of social services at local level. The third pillar relies on the provision of active labour market services to help recipients re-enter the labour market. The reform of the system of active labour market policies needs to be completed, with the shift to a new delivery model.

IRELAND



Recommendation:

Urgently increase use of the Government Housing Fund to rapidly build new homes as currently there is extended reliance on charitable and non-charitable housing associations to provide what is termed 'social housing'. There is a sustained increase in homelessness among adults and almost 3,000 children are sleeping in emergency accommodation. Urgent action is needed to address these issues.

Poverty & Social Protection

Children living in poverty

One in five children under the age of 18 live in poverty in Ireland – 230,000¹. One in four children are living in households experiencing deprivation of two or more necessities². Additionally, 110,000 children live in households with incomes below the poverty line and experiencing deprivation. The Minister for Child and Young People proposed a new National Childcare Scheme to be launched at the end of 2019³. The scheme aims to improve children's outcomes, support lifelong learning, make work pay for parents, reduce child poverty and reduce the cost of quality childcare for thousands of families. The high costs of childcare continue to be the most significant barrier to women remaining in the labour market⁴. This is partly due to childcare centres having to pay exorbitant insurance rates⁵. The insurance companies are raising their cover premiums for childcare businesses like creches and after-school, by more than 100% in some cases⁶.

People with disabilities

The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2018 has not improved the discrimination and social exclusion

experienced by persons with disabilities. The way disability is conceptualised needs to be shifted from a medical and charitable model to a social model. Ireland still has a lot of work to do to make this shift and to leave behind the approach to disability grounded in the medical model. Three aspects need to be addressed in the short term to improve outcomes for people with disabilities:

- Lack of quality of life. Overall people with disabilities have difficulties with access in public transportation and being able to freely move at all times⁷;
- Suitable and appropriate housing. Apart from not including appropriate units of accommodation in building plans – grants and subsidies at local authority level are finite and have a tendency to 'run' out in any one budget year. This means many of the modifications necessary for a person with a disability are not being met or completed and therefore there is a waiting period, sometimes for one year or more.

Territorial disparities

According to Social Justice Ireland⁸, local employment is crucial to welfare and the absence of strong

employment leaves a negative legacy for young people in rural regions. They noted the social and economic cost of empty towns and villages in rural Ireland, with most migrating to the capital city, Dublin. Most health and education services are in the capital. Social Justice Ireland calls for the Irish National Development Plan to address this imbalance.

The National Development Plan, running from 2018 to 2027, lists 'Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities' and 'Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services' as strategic outcomes three and ten⁹. Outcome three relates generally to physical and economic infrastructure in rural regions but does not specifically reference health and social care services. Accessibility to childcare and health services in rural regions is dealt with under Outcome ten, though there is no detail broken down by region¹⁰.

Housing

There is a gap in social housing provision by public authorities, hence the housing system relies on the private sector to provide stock, and on an income supplement. The issue with this supplement called 'Housing Assistance Payment' (HAP), is the disparity between allowed rent limits on the scheme and market rents. For example, the NGO Threshold notes that in one particular area in Dublin, the allowable HAP rent limit for a single person is €660/month, whereas the average market rent for a one-bedroom property is €1,213/month¹¹. One study analysed the gap between HAP limits and market rents and found that in March 2019 92% of properties listed for rent were asking for rents exceeding the HAP limits¹².

Quality of social services

A 2017 report by the Health Information and Quality Authority provided an overview of Social Care and Healthcare Services¹³. Among the main findings was the conclusion that in most services people were receiving good quality care and were being supported to live meaningful lives in health and social care services¹⁴. Many of the service providers were committed to excellence and strove to continuously improve the quality of their services. The quality au-

thority recommended two areas for improvement: governance and safeguarding.

In order to deliver and sustain a good service there must be effective governance. A well-governed service is clear about what it does, how it does it, and is accountable to its stakeholders. In these services, it is obvious who has overall executive accountability for the quality and safety of the service and there are clear lines of accountability at individual, team and service levels. Clear accountability is a fundamental requirement of ensuring a safe service.

Many of the failures of care that impact on residents and people who use services can be traced back to poor governance and a lack of accountability. Too often, inspectors report on deficits in care that competent managers should identify and remedy themselves through assurance processes. In order to address these failures all providers of designated centres need to identify a 'registered provider representative'. The person fulfilling this role will be required to have sufficient seniority and accountability within the service provider organisations. They should be able to provide clarification regarding the executive governance arrangements in place to assure compliance with the Health Act¹⁵, the regulations and nationally-mandated standards.

Social services workforce

In order to reduce public expenditure, a paper from the Department of Public Expenditure highlighted that civil servants, nurses, health and social care professionals had been requested to work on average an additional 1½ to two hours per week¹⁶.

There have also been calls from directors of welfare agencies to reduce social workers training. There is concern that this as a dumbing down of the profession, which is something that was debated in the UK after a training scheme called Frontline was introduced¹⁷. Social workers should caution against the reduction in their training as it would inevitably cause a reduction in the quality of service that they could provide. In terms of recruitment and retention, rates are quite low, and this is probably in large part due to lack of resources¹⁸. The other area that causes concern is the lack of opportunity for promotion¹⁹.



Recommendation:

Measures to fight poverty and to support the most vulnerable must take into consideration the multidimensionality of the needs of vulnerable families and create an adequate infrastructure of local public services. Lack of staff in professional social services in the municipalities, lack of adequate national funding for social policies, and an integrated governance system for local services are currently hindering positive outcomes of social policies.

Poverty & Social Protection

Citizens' income

The citizens' income, RdC (*Reddito di cittadinanza*), started to be implemented in January 2019¹. This measure is based mainly on financial transfers, focuses less on social services and more on employment compared to previous programmes. While previous schemes were mainly the responsibility of local social services, citizens' income primarily involves employment centres. In April 2019 around 950,000 applications were received, of which 54% were from women. Thirty-seven per cent of applications were submitted by claimants in the south, primarily Campania and Sicily, and 73% of applicants were in the age range 40-67².

In addition to financial support, RdC offers two types of inclusion paths: labour inclusion and social inclusion. After a first assessment of needs, individuals and families will enter one of the two paths. Social services professionals are responsible for the social inclusion path and will ensure that social services adapt to their needs. Sixty per cent of

the families that have applied for RdC will not enter the labour integration path, many will therefore enter the social inclusion path and are accompanied by social services with the task of ensuring that they are supported into social inclusion³. For example, in the Tuscany Region, projections show that 29% of RdC will lead to social inclusion paths and 27% to labour inclusion paths⁴. In Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, data emerging from signed social inclusion paths show that most beneficiary households have complex social needs⁵. Only 7% of the beneficiary households have exclusively employment needs.

People with disabilities

The Italian government is currently trying to strengthen the social protection system for people with disabilities⁶ through a disability action programme adopted in 2017 and the citizens' income. Furthermore, the EU disability Card has been regulated in the 2019 budget and funds have been assigned for this disability legislation, family care givers, dependent people and mobility of people with disabilities. Moreover, the budget also focuses on the improvement of assessment procedures

of people's disabilities in terms of access to employment and consequent training programmes⁷. Despite these measures, the social inclusion of people with disabilities is still a challenge. Financial transfers, both in terms of pensions and welfare, are still considered the main support tool while there remains a lack of services and social assistance.

Older people

Social services for older people vary greatly across regions. Overall, there is not an adequate provision of services at local level meaning it is difficult to establish personalised care plans and to evaluate the outcomes. Lack of adequate funding allocated to these services reduces accessibility and increases waiting lists. Therefore, the system still relies on family members and informal carers⁸. Finally, integration between social and health services for older people has not been achieved in the whole country⁹.

Housing and homelessness

The economic crisis and the increase in the cost of housing, especially in big cities led to an increase of evictions. Evictions between 2001 and 2017 grew by 64.2% but started to go down afterwards¹⁰. Regions with highest eviction rates were Lombardy (34%) followed by Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and Lazio¹¹. However, Lombardy developed a strategy to fight evictions including strengthening local cooperation networks, regulatory and fiscal instruments to support families to pay rent, strengthening support for families in difficult economic conditions. It also allocated funds to the municipalities to support those in need, including housing offers specifically for the most vulnerable¹².

Public housing can only satisfy the demand of 750,000 people compared to 1.7 million requests. In November 2015, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies issued 'Guidelines Against Serious Adult Marginalisation in Italy' to create a joint programme between the government, regions and local au-

thorities involving the investment of public funds in innovative housing strategies and services linked to the plans to reduce poverty and on social inclusion. Social assistance mechanisms are activated only if homeless people enter a specific programme or accept to sign a job contract. Homeless people however are excluded from the citizens' income because they do not meet the residence requirement.

Quality of social services

National research shows that public authorities have lower capacity to invest in services in regions where there is greater need, such as city suburbs, rural areas, and regions that are less financially advanced¹³.

Integrated reception services (*Punto Unico di Accesso*), especially in big cities, represent a single access point for hundreds of thousands of citizens. However, even higher numbers of citizens turn to this single point for the provision of services. Having more points of access spread across communities could help public social services meet the needs of citizens in a more targeted way.

Law 328 on the Integration of Social and Health Services¹⁴ is still not applied consistently in all regions and the levels of services vary greatly. There are geographical differences when it comes to social services quality plus difficulties in implementing basic levels of assistance¹⁵. This may be due to the lack of a national framework defining minimum levels of social assistance to be applied in the whole of Italy.

Workforce

Data from research of the National Council of Social Workers' (*Consiglio Nazionale Ordine degli Assistenti Sociali - CNOAS*)¹⁶ shows that social workers in Italy have a salary which is not adequate to the responsibilities and risks of the profession. Social workers also have precarious job contracts and there is a shortage of professionals in all public social services¹⁷.



Recommendation:

A national strategy related to the co-financing for the development of social services across Latvia is a key element to ensure better quality and equal accessibility of social services. The Regional Policy Guidelines for 2013-2019 define a 'basket' of social services, and it is key to allocate national funding to the municipalities - responsible for management and provision of social services - to support the implementation of such basket.

Poverty & Social Protection

People with disabilities

The average pension for people with disabilities is now significantly below the poverty threshold¹. Lack of employment opportunities and access to health services are also additional challenges faced by this group of people.

Average pension for people with disabilities		
	January 2019 Average/ per month	January 2019 Newly granted/ per month
In Latvia (all country except Riga)	€175.77	€155.41
In Riga	€188.81	€156.92

Older people

The average pension for older people is also below the poverty threshold.

Average pension for older people		
	January 2019 Average/ per month	January 2019 Newly granted/ per month
In Latvia (all country except Riga)	€334.52	€305.44
In Riga municipality	€363.12	€362.27

Seventy-four percent of older people aged 65+ in a single person household live under the poverty threshold, making older people the most disadvantaged compared to other populations. Municipalities are responsible for ensuring the provision of social services for people with disabilities and older people, based on individual needs assessment. According to section 8 of the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance, if a person or his/her provider is unable to pay for social care or social rehabilitation services, the costs of the services must be covered by the local government budget, which means they rely on the municipalities' financial capacity.

Since the number of persons who need social care both in residential facilities or at home is increasing

(see table 1 about the situation in the city of Riga), there is a significant risk of lack of social service providers, and as a consequence lack of timely and adequate care if the provision of social services relies only on the municipalities' financial capacity.

TABLE 1:
Number of social care beneficiaries in Riga²

	2016	2017	2018
Long-term care	2,036	2,207	2,237
Home care	8,151	9,545	10,649

Migrants and refugees

Available support for migrants is not based on their needs assessment and it is fragmented (many organisations are involved but there is no coordinating body). Moreover, municipalities are not involved in planning and implementing policies for migrants and refugees. In Latvia, integration of migrants is a competence of the national level.

New minimum income support plan

On 30th October 2014, the Latvian government adopted a plan to improve minimum income support³. The plan foresees an increase in state social security benefit (SSSB) to €99 per month from July 2020, a review of income provided for poor people from July 2021 and a review of the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) from July 2021. The government established a GMI level of 50% of the poverty threshold - €99 for the first person in the household and €67 for every next person in the household.

However, this plan will be implemented only partly according to a draft of the Law on budget 2020 and it does not include any policies concerning the integration of social benefits and social services.

Housing and homelessness

Despite the number of homeless people remaining stable⁴, Latvia still lacks a national strategy on housing and specific programmes tackling homelessness. According to the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance, municipalities are responsible for providing homeless people with night shelters and social services consultation. Social services in mu-

nicipalities are also responsible for assigning housing benefits, and by doing so it is expected that evictions will be reduced. However, this benefit is means-tested and each municipality is responsible for establishing access conditions. As a result, access to the benefit varies greatly from one municipality to another. Social housing is rarely accessible / available because of long waiting lists.

Quality of social services

Funding

The range and number of services differ significantly between municipalities because of their different financial capacities. Recently, all regions in Latvia developed their deinstitutionalisation plans and a general assessment revealed a significant lack of social and health services. The situation is worse in municipalities in rural areas where the municipality is often the only organisation providing social services. Moreover, social service providers and municipalities often lack adequate infrastructure to deliver quality services.

Poor integration of social and health services

There is rather good cooperation between services and organisations like social services, schools, municipal police, family courts, and family doctors. However, there is still poor integration between social and health services, affecting mostly children with disabilities. As a result, social and health care is fragmented and leads to high levels of non-take up of services.

Workforce

According to a recent study⁵, the quality of social work study programmes is not adequate. The number of social work specialists (1 per 1,000 inhabitants) specified in Article 10 of the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance has been achieved in just half of the surveyed local authorities. This ratio is rarely met in small municipalities. In general, social service managers and professionals refer to their workload as high and there is high staff turnover. This leads to insufficient professional training and negatively affects the quality of work in social services.

LITHUANIA



Recommendation:

Ensure availability of high-quality social services in all regions of Lithuania (cities and rural areas) by establishing social assistance centres and employing competent specialists according to the needs of the local population. The coverage and accessibility of services is still an issue, and some areas are still not covered by adequate social services.

Poverty & Social Protection

Social protection is not strong enough to prevent poverty with the minimum income set at only 50% of minimum living standards¹.

Young people

In 2018 the Law on Youth Policy was updated² with clearer guidelines on community-based services for young people. It is supported by funding for community work with vulnerable young people in the form of mobile teams, however only 10 municipalities are involved. More career advice for young people, specialised case management for each young person's situation, and training for youth workers are needed as these elements remain underdeveloped³.

Children and families

Poverty remains an important issue for large families and single-parent households as illustrated below.

Table 1 At risk of Poverty rate for Families in 2017⁴

	One adult with one or more children	Two adults with 1 child	Two adults & 2 children	Two adults & 3 or more children	Population average
At risk of poverty rate	48.4%	11.7%	23.8%	44.3%	22.9%

People with disabilities

People with disabilities receive social assistance of at least €132 per month which is well below the poverty threshold. There is also a lack of data on the employment of people with intellectual disabilities which hinders policy developments.

One investigation into services for people with disabilities⁵ by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour concluded that there was:

- A lack of services (especially employment) for people with intellectual or complex disabilities
- Poor availability of services in rural areas

- Physical accessibility that needs improving in municipalities, especially transport
- Lack of funding that needs improving to raise social assistance levels and improve services.



Housing & homelessness

Rental prices are high, especially in cities⁶. Many people are unable to afford housing, particularly those with disabilities or young families. Homeless people face a number of barriers. Eligibility requirements are too high to access social housing, they suffer from discrimination, services can often only provide immediate support (food, clothing)⁷, and there is a lack of integrated and specialised support⁸.

There should be a higher level of housing benefits, better information on access to housing services, adjustment of rent prices with average wages, and more funding for the adaptation of housing for people with disabilities.

Quality of social services

Progress is being made in quality standards through a project which implements the EQUASS quality framework in 120 municipal and NGO service providers⁹.

Spending on social services has increased to 3% of municipality budgets in 2017 compared to 2.7% in 2015¹⁰. However, large waiting lists continue and service providers struggle to cover basic costs and rely on EU funds due to low municipal budgets¹¹.

Social workers report in some regions a lack of specialised services¹², insufficient opportunities to improve their qualifications and skills, and a high administrative workload limiting the time that they can spend working directly with people using services¹³.

The Law on Social Services and the Social Services Catalogue have not been comprehensively updated since 2006. Municipalities are restricted to providing services in the catalogue, limiting their ability to provide a wide range of support to address new social needs. An update to this legislation, more specialised professionals, the development of service providers in disadvantaged regions, and more training and remuneration for social workers are required to realise high-quality social services in Lithuania.





Recommendation:

While free education, healthcare and childcare¹ are available for all children in Malta, the Child Guarantee should be adopted to ensure that these are adopted for and delivered to children in alternative care or at risk of poverty and social exclusion since this will greatly increase their chances later on in life.

Poverty & Social Protection

Policies to combat poverty in Malta are guided by The National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024². The success of the strategy is shown by a decrease in people at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion from 24% in 2013 to 19% in 2018³.

Social services are one of the six strategic dimensions in this policy. As part of the strategy the following actions are being implemented: the development of community-based one-stop-shops; introduction of innovative services; legislative measures to combat discrimination and safeguard the rights and wellbeing of vulnerable persons; and the promotion of adequate and affordable housing⁴.

Part of the success of the strategy is thanks to its integrated approach. A committee of representatives from the ministries responsible for social policy, education, employment, health and culture coordinates progress on the strategy, ensuring actions are implemented in an integrated way.

Children and families

A free childcare scheme for families where parents are in employment or education began in April 2014 with a budget of €76 million and covered 17,500 children by June 2019. During the implementation of the project, the employment rate for women has consistently improved and the poverty rate for children has decreased.

Table 1 Employment Rate and Child Poverty 2015-2018^{5,6}

Year	Total Employment Rate for Women (20-64 years)	Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (0-17 years)
2015	55.3%	28.4%
2016	58.0%	24%
2017	60.6%	23%
2018	63.4%	22.8%

People with disabilities

The 2019 State Budget has increased support for people with disabilities. The Department of Social Security extended eligibility for a higher disability allowance for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities with high support needs⁷. Benefit rates for persons deemed 'unfit to work' were also increased to better align with the national minimum wage.

A multi-stakeholder working group on disability has also started involving government departments and civil society. The working group agreed to introduce a new EU Disability Card system, a parking concessions scheme, access to funding for personal assistants and independent and community-based living schemes.

Migrants and Refugees

There are several barriers when it comes to the support that migrants and refugees can access. Those with a temporary permit to stay in the country are not eligible to access social services once the permit expires after 90 days and they cannot legally work. Despite this, many migrants with this permit stay beyond the 90-day limit.

The requirement to have a permanent address to access social protection can be another barrier for the social inclusion of migrants, in addition to the fact that many find informal work that is not covered by legal protections. According to Malta's Public Employment Services (Jobsplus) a total of 823 cases of informal work by migrants were identified between January and July 2019.

Older people

The 2014-2020 Active Ageing Strategy⁸ guides social services support for older people in Malta. It is

based on: active participation in the labour market, participation in society and independent living. Social services support older people to live in the community as long as possible, with progress towards this supported by new initiatives such as grants of €5,200 per year for older people to employ personal carers.

Housing

New initiatives have been launched to improve access to housing. One project will involve the construction of 1,700 social housing units⁹. Another focuses on the development of personalised care and support combined with housing for vulnerable people¹⁰. A national housing strategy is currently being discussed to give more strategic guidance.

The Housing Authority identified a need for more affordable housing when undertaking surveys of social housing applicants. In light of this, an affordable housing policy is being developed and pilot projects are being planned to create more affordable housing.

Quality of social services

The Social Care Standards Authority (replacing the former Department for Social Welfare Standards) was set up by the 2018 Social Care Standards Authority Act. The Authority issues licences and provides improvement recommendations to service providers. A number of 678 visits were carried out to social services between January and August 2019 for licensing, monitoring, and feedback purposes. It also uses data driven analytics to measure service quality. The data covers elements such as the views of service users, which is used to provide feedback to providers.

NETHERLANDS



Recommendation:

Simplify the national system of social benefits which is currently complicated for people using social services. Invest in collecting data and intensify communication (at national and local level) about available social services to reduce the non-take up of services and/or the difficulties people experience in requesting support.

Poverty & Social Protection

Social exclusion and poverty

On 23rd November 2018, the Dutch Research Institute (*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau* - SCP) published its national poverty and social protection review. In 2016, there were about 980,000 people (6% of the national population) living in poverty in the Netherlands. This figure had gone down from 7.6% in 2013. People most at risk of poverty are those living on benefits, single mothers and migrants. Of those on benefits, 37% are deemed to be poor, while this is the case for 16% of migrants and 16% of single mothers.

A significant proportion of those living in poverty consists of people at work who may be poor because of low work intensity (part-time jobs) or low hourly wage. According to an SCP report from October 2018, there were 320,000 working poor in 2014, (4.6% of all working people)¹. SCP reports² that there are more working poor in the Netherlands compared to Denmark and Belgium, but less than in Germany and the UK. Public social services in local authorities do not have a specific policy on the working poor and have difficulties reaching out to them to provide them with support. In 2016, 9% of all children, 280,000, lived in poverty. However, within this group there are significant differences. Twenty-five percent of migrant children and 55% of children within a household receiving benefits, live in poverty. In contrast, poverty among older people is very low (3%).

In addition to wages and social benefits there are specific forms of social assistance for the unemployed, people who are unable to work and for those unable to have a full-time job, those on temporary sick leave, and disabled children until the age of 18. The number of people receiving social assistance dropped to 412,000 in March 2019 from 432,700 in March 2018³.

Municipalities are responsible for agreeing and providing social support based on the responsibilities assigned to them by national legislation. The threshold to receive this type of support for citizens receiving regular income is usually set between 10-30% of the minimum wage. Support may include access to sport and culture, health insurance, reducing or subsidising local taxes and financing food, clothing and toy banks. Municipalities have a legal responsibility to provide support that prevents residents from falling in debt. For instance, in 2017, 94,200 people requested debt relief support and 62,100 participated in debt prevention related programmes.

Child poverty reduction strategy

In 2017, a yearly amount of €100 million was made available by the national government to help local authorities implement strategies to fight child poverty. As a result, municipalities used 82% of this budget to support the implementation of measures such as facilitating participation at sports clubs (e.g. contributions to financing sports gear and clothing) and culture (e.g. music lessons, theatre). The budget was also used for supporting full participation in school activities (school trips, provision

of laptops and tablets) and family related activities (supporting birthday parties, membership of the local library). Fifty-five per cent of the budget used was implemented for in-kind services. As a result, 78% of municipalities reported that they had been able to reach out to more children, with whom they would not have been able to get in touch without this additional funding⁴. In five cities, there has been an experiment (facilitated by the Missing Chapter Foundation) involving children in local policy-making to address issues related to child poverty⁵.

Housing and Homelessness

According to research conducted by the national government⁶, there is a growing lack of availability of affordable and social housing for young and older people. There are long waiting lists for social housing, while young people who wish to establish themselves independently must deal with unaffordable properties in the private sector. New social and affordable housing is being built slowly and does not respond to the current demand. This means that low income people are being increasingly excluded from the housing market. Local authorities have limited influence on the housing market. Housing allowance is available for rents up to €720 monthly. To be eligible for housing in this category there are strict rules (related to income, assets, Dutch nationality and so on). The number of homeless people has been increasing over the last seven years, with more homeless men than women. The number of homeless young people is also high and has been increasing since 2016.

In 2016, the number of people using some kind of housing facility or shelter was at least 60,000 (up 2,000 since the year before)⁷. People using these services have a personalised integrated programme that includes a variety of social services (including financial assistance, psychological assistance, drug addiction and support to live independently). The ministry responsible for housing recently wrote to all local authorities reminding them of their responsibility to ensure that homeless people have access to the necessary support⁸.

Municipalities have a major shortage of suitable shelter and affordable housing for homeless people and rely partly on support from NGOs, such as the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, and churches. In 2016, the municipality of Amsterdam requested that the national government construct 1,000 homes for homeless people in the framework of policies supporting the homeless to leave shelters and live on their own. In its reply, the minister of Welfare and Sports made a call to the municipalities to start a conversation on the subject with local and regional housing corporations.

Quality of social services

In 2015, several legal duties such as social support, youth care, and societal participation were transferred from national to local authorities. At a time when their budgets were being reduced, local authorities became responsible for the implementation and financing of specific social services duties. These included:

- The Youth law made municipalities responsible for all forms of care for children and young people, including hospital care;
- The Social Support Act (WMO 2015) transferred to the municipalities the responsibility for providing support for people who cannot live independently. As a result, municipalities became responsible for daytime support, informal care, relief for informal care providers, protected living and domestic violence. Municipalities must assess the support their residents need and may provide services in-kind or through a personal budget for citizens to buy their services from the market. Municipalities can request that citizens make a financial contribution of up to €17.50 every 4 weeks;
- The 'Participation Law' transferred to the municipalities responsibility for regulating the participation of citizens in economic activities. This includes support for people with disabilities, people who need a protected working environment, young disabled people, support for reintegration in the labour market, and social and financial assistance.

Although municipalities were convinced that they were best placed to implement these tasks - because of being closest to citizens - the lack of time, knowledge, experience and reduced budgets combined meant that they mostly focused on continuing the care that they were already providing rather than redeveloping services according to their new roles. Now municipalities are working towards transforming their services and are in discussions with the national government regarding adapting the budget to the new situation, based on the analysis of the implementation of the law between 2015 and 2018.

In 2016, about two million people, or 11.5% of households, used one or more of these social services. According to a SCP 2018 publication on the results of decentralising social services to local authorities⁹, 20% of people receiving social support report that they feel lonely even though 15% of social support beneficiaries say that they can find help in their personal network. Fifty per cent of people receiving social care services explained that they could not fill in the necessary forms by themselves while 60% of families facing multiple problems reported that they did not receive support for all their problems. Income support provision has been growing over the years, as has the number of children in the child protection system (on average 5% each year).

POLAND



Recommendation:

Introducing a law aimed at tackling issues of remuneration, qualifications and competences of social services staff. This Act should also regulate education and training for social services professions and secure financial resources for the professional development of social services employees. These policies are important to address the ongoing shortage of social care and social work professionals.

Poverty & Social Protection

Young people

Unemployed young people are supported by labour offices and traditional voluntary labour corps that help young people with problems finishing vocational training or secondary school. In addition, they are designed to professionally activate young people through job counselling, training, job placement and coaching. Young people with educational problems are supported by youth educational centres and youth socio-therapy centres. However, there is still a deficit of daily youth support centres. Many rural and small municipalities have little or no services for young people.

Children and families

Children and families are supported by the Family 500+ Programme¹, which aims to boost birth-rates and reduce child poverty by providing income supplements and improving the living conditions of large families. In May 2019, the government expanded this programme for every child in the family (previously it was for the second and next children). For each child, the programme allocates PLN 500 (about €120) per month. The total budget of the programme is PLN 42 billion (about €9.7 billion)

for one year. There is a dispute among experts in Poland in relation to the effectiveness of the programme, especially due to its high costs. Some experts challenge its effect on birth rate while others argue that it has a limited impact on reducing child poverty².

Local authorities are currently investing in nurseries, as there is a significant lack of them, and in public kindergartens. For this purpose, municipalities are using funding from government programmes dedicated to family services. Since September 2018 students in schools have been receiving a one-off benefit for the purchase of books and school material.

Older people

There has been increasing interest in the provision of financial benefits for older people. In April 2019, the Polish Parliament adopted the Act on a One-off Cash Benefit for Pensioners³. In May 2019, pensioners received a one-off cash benefit from the government of PLN 1,000 (about €234). However, this has not been accompanied by the development of appropriate long-term care services. Access to health and social care is difficult for older people, especially when it comes to specialist services.

Housing and homelessness

Poland lacks a comprehensive housing policy. There is social housing in municipalities but not enough to cover demand. Residential apartments are created for older and dependent people as an alternative to social housing. Not all those who need it have access to social housing, but many municipalities are currently investing in building social housing because of the increasing need. There are also programmes for homeless people and a network of shelters. However, housing services are not integrated with other services.

It is recommended that there is an increase in investment in social and protected housing to meet the growing need for social housing. At national level, the government launched a programme to support homeless people⁴. The programme builds around four pillars: preventative measures, activation, modernisation of infrastructures and innovation. This national programme is complemented at the local level, mainly in large cities, by specific programmes to combat homelessness.

Quality of social services

Accessibility

Access to social services depends on the size of the municipality and on the different levels of involvement of local authorities. Many large cities have developed social services because local authorities invest in their development. In the large cities of Warsaw, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Poznań, Kraków, Wrocław, and Łódź, there is a good level of social services. The situation is much worse in smaller cities. Thirty per cent of municipalities in Poland do not provide basic care services with only 18% of municipalities providing day-care facilities for young people⁵. This means that there is a large deficit of social services in Poland.

Integrated services

In July 2019, the Parliament adopted the Act on Social Service Centres⁶ (CUS) due to enter into force on the 1st of January 2020. Local authorities will be able to create centres providing comprehensive social services to residents. The act provides the basis for the creation of bodies that will manage local social ser-

vices in an integrated and coordinated manner.

The Act establishes that social services in municipalities would become responsible for planning, coordinating and integrating social services. Municipalities will also have the competence, though not the obligation, to run social service centres. The legislature assumes that current social assistance centres will transform into social services centres. However, in Poland, social assistance centres have traditionally been associated with payments of cash benefits and not with the provision of social services. The Act should enforce the creation of social services centres in every municipality, for which specific funding should be allocated.

Workforce

There is a general lack of social workers, formal and informal carers and personal assistants for people with disabilities. This applies to the majority of municipalities in Poland. This is mainly due to social care professions having low prestige and being inadequately paid. If this trend is not reversed, there will be a shortage of social service professionals in Poland in the near future. The solution could be to devote funds from the European Social Fund to train social services professionals and for the development of social services in the new 2021-2027 funding period. There are also not enough candidates to study social policy and social work at university. This may contribute to future shortages of people with social policy and social work qualifications.

Funding

The government has increased financial resources for social benefits, but there is insufficient funding for social services. This includes, a lack of services for dependent people requiring long-term, palliative care as well as a deficit of services for people with disabilities, older people and young people.

Monitoring and evaluation

Service quality monitoring is carried out by regional offices at regional and local levels. Under the Act on Social Assistance⁷, Polish law regulates the standards of some services. Standards exist, for example, for services in social welfare homes, services for homeless people, and care services. However, there are no standards developed for other social services.

PORTUGAL



Recommendation:

Due to persistently high levels of poverty in Portugal, it is imperative to launch a national strategy to fight poverty in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights. This should prioritise the most deprived citizens and the following areas: income, housing, access to social services, healthcare, education and training, access to culture, and justice system.

Poverty & Social Protection

Children and families

The National Programme Foster Care (*Acolhimento Familiar*¹) will be improved, by increasing the amount of financial benefits and providing extra support to foster families so that foster children and families have better access to services. The aim is to place more children in child protection with foster care families as a high number are still in residential care. In 2017, there were 7,553 children and young people placed outside their biological families and only 246 of them were in foster care. The national government is currently discussing the adoption of a law on foster care².

The programme Local Contracts for Social Development (*Contratos Locais de Desenvolvimento Social – CLDS*³) which are focused on the work at community level is also improving living conditions for families and children. There are 152 districts currently involved in the programme. In the next programming period (2019-2022) 255 districts will be covered and financial resources will double. For

example, in the Municipality of Matosinhos initiatives under this programme included the creation of a Parental Support Service covering 68 families and 151 children mainly at risk; an Employment Shop supporting 1,560 unemployed people; an entrepreneurship training that registered 473 attendees, the creation of 42 new businesses; and a Bank of Resources for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities

The implementation of a universal financial benefit for inclusion (*Prestação Social para a Inclusão*⁴) and the programme for independent life – (*Modelo de Apoio à Vida Independente*⁵) providing support via personal assistants – is contributing to addressing some of the issues faced by people with disabilities in Portugal. Despite these two improvements, access to employment and adequate housing still need to be addressed. In terms of employment, Portugal established quotas for people with disabilities (2% for the private sector and 5% for the public sector) but the employment rate is still low, with negative consequences for social inclusion. Portugal needs to have a comprehensive

national plan on disability as a way to improve the coordination between different sectors and the financial resources available.

Older people

Additional benefits try to address the low level of pensions for the most vulnerable. For example, the Solidarity Ageing Benefit (*Complemento Solidário para Idosos*⁶) was recently extended to disability pensions.

Housing and homelessness

The emergency and provisional nature of many institutional responses, the lack of support aimed at housing, and the absence of prevention-oriented interventions have directly contributed to the persistence of homelessness. Social housing is a municipal responsibility and, in general, municipalities have extensive waiting lists of social housing requests. For instance, Porto, the country's second largest city, has a waiting list of 1,000 applications. Some measures were implemented to reduce this pressure, including social support for rents⁷. This is a means-tested benefit that provides money for households to keep them within the regular housing market.

All local authorities will be requested to develop a housing local strategy which would, among other things, implement integrated services. The process is just starting, but it is an ambitious plan that was recently reinforced by a new Law on Housing⁸ approved on 15 July 2019.

Quality of social services

One of the primary current challenges in ensuring social services quality is the lack of an adequate number of social services units supporting people with dementia.

There are positive developments in the area of integration of services, mostly due to the implementation of the public programme, Social Network (*Rede Social*⁹). This is a national programme developed in every district aiming to improve the coordination of services and better use of the existing financial resources. Based on an initial assessment, the Social Network programme aims to create a plan for local development involving all local organisations (public, private and third sector) under the coordination of municipalities. The Social Network assesses local initiatives and their adequacy to respond to local needs. There are geographical differences regarding implementation of the local development plans but these plans are expected to encourage the development of integrated services.

In terms of workforce, more should be done on their life-long learning. Employment conditions of social workers are still precarious which negatively affects professionalisation of social services in general. Low salaries attract few to the sector, and this should be tackled in the short term to prevent the recruitment gap from becoming bigger.

Currently, most social services are organised and provided by third sector organisations, mainly funded by the state on the basis of national agreements. Recently a new agreement was signed between the government and NGOs increasing funding provided by the state and establishing basic rules for the implementation of projects. During 2018, there was an increase in the number of cooperation agreements (*Acordos de Cooperação*¹⁰) with third sector organisations for the provision of social services. The government signed 466 agreements, and out of those, 92 were new. These agreements concern 5,845 users and receive a total financial support of €21,1 million¹¹ per year. The adequacy of the financing very much depends on a variety of factors, in particular in the local context.

ROMANIA



Recommendation:

Ensure that the state budget includes funding for community social services, especially for poor or marginalised communities. Currently, community social services are funded exclusively by local finances and some municipalities do not have the financial capacities to create them. As a result, vulnerable people living in those areas do not have adequate access to social services.

Poverty & Social Protection

Young people

Despite an increase in employment in 2018, a large number of young people remain unemployed. No significant progress has been made towards the integration of services addressing the needs of young people, such as employment, social inclusion and education. Active labour market policies are not comprehensively looking to individual needs and are not enough focused on upskilling. Social services are still characterized by insufficient coverage of professional social workers and low quality services. Despite projects being in place, their implementation is lagging behind. One example is the project INTESPO¹, which had as a general objective to increase the number of inactive NEETs registered with the Public Employment Service (PES) in order to provide personalised measures. However, no data are available about the progress on the effective inclusion of NEETs after the implementation of this project.

Children

Child poverty is still high (38.80% of children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2017)². Children with one or both parents living abroad³ are the most affected, and there are no specific services for this group in the community. Children with disabilities face difficulties as they are often excluded from mainstream education. Schools for children with disabilities often fall short of providing specialised education services.

People with disabilities

A few legislative changes have been approved to respond to the needs of people with disabilities⁴, including the simplification of procedures for benefits payments and more opportunities to access assistive technologies. Despite these changes, barriers to social and professional integration remain. An integrated approach and person-centred social services are required to improve access of persons with disabilities to education, skills development and life-long learning. Moreover, it is key to foster the development of feasible self-employment and

social enterprises in an integrated form with social services in order to provide people with disabilities with tailored support.

Older people

Pensions for older people have increased, but many older people live in poor, isolated rural areas struggling with very low incomes that are hardly enough for daily food. Overall, 36.2% of the population aged over 65 years were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2017⁵ with the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion for people aged 75 and over.

Housing and homelessness

Romania's house prices continue to rise⁶ and there is a chronic social housing shortage with little or no social housing available⁷ for vulnerable people. Forced evictions are a constant threat for poor families occupying homes illegally. They struggle to pay private rent on low incomes.

Romania has the highest overcrowding rate among the population at risk of poverty in the EU (60.6%)⁸. More than 60,000 Romanian Roma families live in informal settlements in the outskirts of villages and towns, without having ownership of the land where the house is built and without construction permits and documents for their properties. Problems related to informal housing exacerbate the vulnerability of many communities, complicating their existence and imposing barriers in accessing services and programmes that would otherwise be dedicated to them⁹.

Future measures should be based on an impact analysis to ensure implementation. For example, the state announced a policy to pay 75% of the rent for those who find a job in a different place to their usual residence. However, this policy has not been successful.

Quality of social services

Funding

Public social services are mainly funded by local authorities. Due to their limited budgets, municipalities' investment in developing social services and training for social workers is poor.

Workforce

The lack of a continuous training system at national level and the insufficient number of qualified social workers in rural areas are major issues. Local social services are understaffed and overloaded with work that in many cases is related to paperwork linked with financial transfers. One piece of research on training of staff in social services showed there to be no correlation between the tasks and training of the persons responsible for these tasks¹⁰. In many cases, staff in social services do not have university education in social work.

Integrated services

An EU funded project on community services to establish the first teams of social workers, community nurses and county school counsellors has been slowly implemented. However, there has been no reported progress on the implementation of two laws passed in 2017: The Act to employ a Minimum of a Social Worker in each public social support service; and the Act for the Development of Integrated Community Services.

Monitoring and evaluation

Romania has a national social services monitoring quality system. According to the principles of this system, all social service providers (private or public) are supposed to be able to provide similar quality social services for all vulnerable groups. Based on this general framework for quality, several quality standards for specific social services were developed¹¹. In 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice approved the Minimum Quality Standards for Family Social Services for Children who come from the State Protection System¹².

SLOVAKIA



Recommendation:

Continue the process of transition from institutional to community-based care and reinforce social work outreach in marginalised communities, focusing on the sustainability of programmes after European funding comes to an end. This is important to reduce the high levels of social exclusion still faced by people with disabilities, Roma and older people.

Poverty & Social Protection

Roma

Roma people continue to be one of the groups most at risk of poverty and social exclusion with 54% experiencing inadequate living conditions¹. To address this, projects have been launched to promote the participation of Roma children in inclusive and desegregated education, including a guide for schools on preventing segregation, and mentoring programmes.

People with Disabilities

An amendment to the Act on Direct Payments for severe disabilities came into force in 2018². According to the 2018 National Reform Programme³, the amendment introduced changes to support people with disabilities to ensure the implementation of rights related to independent living and social inclusion. The changes include:

- Reduced benefit trap for people with disabilities who earn a salary by removing the requirement to co-finance personal assistants once reaching a certain income threshold
- Increase of the hourly rate that persons with disability can claim for personal assistance from €3.82 to €4.18 to encourage the recruitment of personal assistants⁴.

State subsidies for long-term care in social service facilities will now be based to a much greater extent on the level of care dependency. The government confirmed that this is €504 in 2019 and €546 in 2020 for residential services for service users with the highest level of dependency. The care allowance for people with the highest level of dependency will also progressively increase from €330 per month in 2018 to €430.35 by 2019⁵.

Housing and homelessness

A 2011 national survey found that there were 23,483 homeless people in Slovakia⁶. A 2016 survey in Bra-

tilava found there were 2,064 homeless people in the city (0.5%), including 284 children.

Preventative measures and warning systems are not in place to identify and offer assistance to people at risk of homelessness, such as people who might face eviction. The number of evictions is not measured. However, people who have been evicted often struggle to find new accommodation. Roma people face especially high rates of eviction⁷. Other groups are also particularly vulnerable to homelessness, for example young people leaving children's homes and people leaving prisons.

People who are homeless struggle to qualify for social housing due to strict eligibility conditions, such as having a permanent place of residence in the municipality, no debts, and a regular income.

However, research has highlighted the importance of investing in housing support, by demonstrating that the cost of providing supported housing is less than addressing the consequences associated with homelessness⁸.

A national strategy for preventing and tackling homelessness is expected from the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2019. Steps should include an authority responsible for addressing homelessness, stronger social services support, more social housing, the implementation of 'Housing First' and the adoption of the Ethos housing exclusion classification⁹ so that its principles are implemented in strategic papers and legislation.

Quality of social services

The number of people on waiting lists for an assessment by social services continues to rise, reaching 9,589 at the end of 2017. Of these, 58% are older

people¹⁰. Community-based services remain underdeveloped with services continuing to be dominated by institutions¹¹. Institutional care represents 58.6% of social services that are provided¹². These services tend to be large institutions for over 70 people with a mix of different users.

There is also an absence of integrated services, with a lack of cooperation between social, health, and education services¹³. A 2019 initiative for a new law on long-term care services that would have introduced reforms to address fragmentation failed to be adopted by the Ministries of Social Affairs and Health.

The recruitment and retention of staff is an issue for social services. Understaffed services result in high workloads, whilst salaries are very low. The average wage in Slovakia in 2017 was €1,035 per month compared to an average of €732 for social services professionals, and only €670 for carers¹⁴.

Quality standards for social services have been in place for 10 years. According to research, 42% of social services providers have not started to implement the system of quality standards as required by the law¹⁵. Monitoring of the standards did not start until September 2019. EU funds have been used to prepare the monitoring of the quality standards, including two research projects, and the launch of the monitoring system this year¹⁶.

The introduction of quality standards monitoring is a good first step. However, the understanding of quality should shift from management to meeting people's rights. To ensure this, people who use services should form part of the quality monitoring process. There is currently no legal obligation to do so.

SLOVENIA



Recommendation:

Legislation regulating minimum income should also regulate essential social services that would complement the financial benefits based on the individual person's needs and circumstances. It is necessary to develop an individual-focused approach that would ensure that every person in the minimum income scheme gets an individualised social pathway along with the financial benefit.

Poverty & Social Protection

In 2018, the Centres for Social Work (CSW) went through a reorganisation, and social protection transfers were affected by delays. There has also been an increase in the number of people requesting social assistance: 14,000 more people by April 2019 compared to the previous year.

Recent developments affecting benefits

In June 2019, the national Government adopted an amendment of the Social Security Benefits Act¹ which is now in Parliament. The aim of the amendment is twofold: separate Financial Social Assistance (FSA²) and minimum wage, as well as activate in the shortest period of time beneficiaries of the FSA. According to the proposal, the amount of FSA will be kept at the same level (€392.75) but the supplement for work activity (SWA) will be removed. The SWA is a supplement to the FSA approved during

the economic crisis in 2011, when the FSA was only €230. Currently, the FSA is €392.75 per month and together with the SWA, accounts for 89% of the minimum wage (almost €600).

The abolition of the SWA will be mitigated by a new measure: remuneration received by unemployed people included in active employment measures, which will be added to the FSA. This is regarded as crucial for the faster labour market activation of FSA beneficiaries and is especially necessary because of workforce shortages³.

Recent developments affecting state benefits

In December 2018, a monthly automatic extension of benefits was introduced for annual rights, such as child allowances, state scholarships, reduced payment of kindergarten, and subsidies for snacks and lunches for children. This means that applications for extending the above-mentioned annual rights don't have to be sent by the applicant and

that CSW will automatically decide on further entitlement to the right. The renewal takes into consideration any changes in their circumstances

Children

In July 2019, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs announced the introduction of a universal child allowance. Currently, there are eight levels of child allowance, and child allowance is calculated as part of minimum income. The amount of child allowance is set first, and the amount of FSA is decided according to the level of child allowance. The Association of Centres for Social Work suggests that child allowance should not be part of the minimum income. The national government should first provide the basic income necessary for survival, and then add the child allowance to that amount, to offer better support for children.

Quality of social services

Lack of integrated services and an inadequate number of social workers is hindering provision. Currently, there are no single points of access for services⁴ and CSW are understaffed. In 2019, CSWs got 72 new employees, which were distributed according

to information from the social database that takes into consideration the number of people supported in each centre. Currently, no centre is staffed 100%. Recently, due to the shortfall in numbers of professional social workers, CWs are employing people with other educational backgrounds as well as trainees.

Alongside mainstream social services, the government also funds a network of social welfare programmes. In 2018, the ministry co-financed 192 social welfare programmes⁵. These are programmes covering 10 areas determined by Article 3.1 of the Resolution on the National Social Assistance Programme 2013-2020⁶. Most co-financed programmes are carried out in the field of prevention of violence (38), followed by social rehabilitation programmes for people with addictions (32) and programmes in the field of mental health (24). There were 23 programmes for children and adolescents, 22 programmes for psychosocial support for children and families, 22 programmes for homeless people, 15 programmes for people with disabilities, 9 for older people, 4 for Roma people and 10 other programmes for the elimination of social distress⁷. For example, the CSW in Ljubljana implements four programmes targeting socially excluded children and young people, homeless people and single mothers⁸.



SPAIN



Recommendation:

Adopt effective social protection measures to fight child poverty across all Spanish regions. These measures should improve social transfers efficiency, strengthen temporary social emergency services, develop adequate economic protection for families, improve school benefits, expand childcare services, and secure adequate staff in children's services. These measures should be properly co-financed by the state and the resources of community social services managed by the municipalities.

Poverty & Social Protection

Young people

According to the National Statistics Institute¹, early school leaving in 2017 was 18.3%, which means that it has decreased 13.4 points in the last 10 years. In seven regions, the figure is below 15%. It is lower among women and higher in foreign populations (35.8% compared to 15.9% among the Spanish-born population). In 2018, the government approved a plan to reduce youth unemployment² to 23.5%. The plan includes a proposal from the General Council of Social Work to improve cooperation between employment and social services to address the needs of young people, reorienting efforts towards job training and skills. New models of training and employment are being implemented through Second Chance Schools which prioritise the return to education of young people who dropped out of school, or their access to employment programmes. The plan foresees hiring 3,000 social services professionals to support young people with difficulties in finding employment.

Children and families

According to the third social services report in Spain³, social services professionals continue to describe the most common profile of people using services in situations of

poverty or social exclusion as unemployed women aged 35 to 50, with children in primary or secondary education. According to the National Statistics Institute 21.6% of the population was at risk of poverty in 2017, (compared to 22.3% the year before). Government data⁴ shows that 140,000 families have no income, and 23% of those households have at least one dependent child. According to the High Commissioner for fighting child poverty, there are 1,400,000 children living in poverty and 2,200,000 at risk of poverty⁵. This situation can be defined as structural child poverty due to high unemployment, precarious working conditions, lack of adequacy and effectiveness of social transfers and impact of service cuts.

There are no minimum standards on social care at national level as competences lie with the regions, which means that there are significant regional differences. There are also significant differences between urban and rural areas. Social services have identified worrying situations of nutritional deficits of children in schools, health or social services centres⁶ but no comprehensive measures have been taken to address these. Particularly concerning has been the situation of unaccompanied children which reached 13,796⁷ under state care by the end of 2018. The Spanish government approved €38 million to distribute among regions for the provision of support. However, this decree has been contested by the regions as legisla-

tion focuses only on the arrival of young people and on first reception, not on the provision of continuing care. Several regions have also disagreed with the distribution. For example, Catalonia received €2 million - or 5.2% of the total amount - even though it supports more than 3,000 young people affected (approximately 18%). Regions have these children under their guardianship and they are mostly placed in residential homes, but state funds are not sufficient or comprehensive enough for adequate care and integration of these minors⁸.

People with disabilities and older people

Employment of people with disabilities has improved and stands at 26% compared with 64.4% for people without disabilities⁹. Measures promoting the employment of people with disabilities focus mostly on employers' incentives but authorities across Spain are committed to strengthening accessibility in employment, public transport and to breaking down barriers at home and in public spaces.

There are significant obstacles to the implementation of the Law on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care for People in situations of dependency. First is unequal financing. While it should be 50% funded by the national government and 50% by the regions, the latter bear most responsibility - in some cases over 80%. Second, there are high waiting lists to access care as per data from the Social Services and Older People Institute (IMSERSO)¹⁰. Third, there are significant regional differences in management, delivery, and co-payment which means unequal access to care depending on the region where people in need of support live. Finally, no impact evaluation has been made regarding costs, employment (e.g. feminisation of care), quality of life based on care received, or working conditions. Nonetheless, the government recently introduced a measure supporting informal carers so that they pay social security contributions, which has been well received.

Income poverty

The European Union has recommended that Spain strengthens its minimum income scheme but this has proved difficult because of regional competences and differences. Each regional government has its own minimum scheme and some regions, as it has been the case in Asturias, have recently regulated to ensure access to benefits as a right and bring together a series of financial benefits in addition to minimum income. These include child benefits, access to housing, youth and disability benefits, and foster care support¹¹.

Quality of social services

Significant regional differences

The regions have exclusive powers in the area of social services, hence they have their own legislation to regulate the resources, benefits, activities, programmes, objectives and facilities aimed at improving population's care. With no national coordination body, people may have different rights depending on where they reside. It should be noted that there are problems with services accessibility and coverage in rural areas, for which incentives must be established. As an example, by the end of 2018, social services in La Manchuela (Castilla La Mancha), which serves 24 municipalities, saved 87% of their budget and expanded their team of professionals thanks to an agreement signed with the region for the development of their rural area. They extended social care for the most disadvantaged and implemented services such as home care and a plan against energy poverty.

Not enough workforce

A key indicator of quality is the workforce. However, the current ratio of one social worker per 10,000 people makes it difficult to address needs beyond social emergencies. Professional bodies recommend a ratio of 1 per 1,700 people and having one social worker in every school, health centre, hospital, prison and court, based on the assessment of needs and population.

Adequate funding

There is an agreement between national government, regions and municipalities for the financing of community¹² social services (under the responsibility of municipalities). However, funding provided by the national government for social care has been reduced by 60% since 2011¹³.

Quality monitoring

There is a social services users information system to gather data about the use of services and the Spanish federation of municipalities' quality committee makes proposals. However, there are no national quality standards. Since the system is fully decentralised, there are quality inspection agencies in each region that are responsible for the accreditation of service providers and for ensuring that they fulfil certain quality standards. There are also companies like AENOR that certify quality standards related to facilities, teams, commissioning, user information, human resources and management in integrated care, day and night care facilities, home care and tele-care. In addition, regional authorities have also developed catalogues or maps of available services as well as tools to gather data about people's access to services such as joint social records tools¹⁴.



Recommendation:

A sustainable national plan to provide housing for groups outside the regular housing market is needed. This includes looking at external models of social housing which can be applied in Sweden. The shortage of housing has led to large groups finding themselves outside the regular housing market and an increasing number turn to social services for help to solve their accommodation difficulties.

Poverty & Social Protection

Eighteen per cent of the population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion and more than 1% live in severe material poverty¹. People born in a foreign country and the unemployed are more likely to live in conditions of severe material deprivation than those born in Sweden with two Swedish born parents, and compared with those who work. Despite the rise in employment, the share of people in severe material deprivation has not decreased².

The NGO *Stadsmissionen* has recently released its 2018 poverty report which highlighted that compared to previous years there is a growing number of families who are more or less permanently reliant on social assistance and in need of support³. Older people, families with children, asylum seekers and EU citizens from central Europe are the most affected by poverty. Sixty per cent of people who seek help from *Stadsmissionen* are long-term recipients of public social assistance benefits but find them insufficient⁴. In many cases individuals are caught between different parts of the benefits system and eligibility requirements are not met. The Association of Directors of Social Welfare Services (FSS) says that the level of social assistance needs to be reviewed.

Children & families

Overall, the situation is improving, and the majority of families are better off economically. The number of children in poverty is declining and incomes are increasing⁵. There is a continued decline in poverty for children from 10.8% in 2011 to 9.3% in 2016. Although the situation is improving for most households, inequality between high-income households and low-income households has grown compared to the past⁶.

Migrants, refugees & young people

The number of arrivals decreased to 28,939 in 2016 and by 2018 had reached a lower level at 21,502⁷. Once a residence permit is granted, they are allocated to municipalities. In 2018, 44,217 migrants gained residency in municipalities. Up to July 2019, 17,373 asylum-seekers had moved into municipalities from either accommodation arranged by the Swedish Migration Agency or housing they have found themselves.

Since 2017, the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants (Dua) has been working on a new model of cooperation between stakeholders based on local routes to work for the individual. At the latest follow up in December 2018 there were 6,302 people participating in 463 local routes. In total there are some 526 active local routes for young people and newly arrived

migrants to participate in⁸. At the end of 2018, a total of 1,438 had completed local routes and entered employment. This represents 50% of the total participants and 48% of these had employment with financial support from the employment office⁹.

A significant concern at present is uncertainty resulting from an ongoing reform of the Swedish public employment service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*). The objective of the reform is to make *Arbetsförmedlingen* more effective. *Arbetsförmedlingen* is designed to be the authority that makes decisions and provides subsidies. Services to support the unemployed into the labour market will be provided by private contracted agencies. It has not yet been decided if municipalities can apply to provide these support services and receive financial compensation. The reform means a large increase in private companies being used to coach the unemployed and match them to jobs and a greater reduction in the local presence of employment services including a reduction in the presence of staff, fewer local offices, greater centralisation and a service primarily reached by digitalised means¹⁰. Planned job cuts will involve 4,500 employees of public employment services. Continued close cooperation between the public employment service and municipalities and social services are included in priority areas following the reform. However, concrete details of how this is to be achieved have yet to be announced. The reform is ongoing and due to be fully implemented in 2021.

Housing and homelessness

Two hundred and forty Swedish municipalities (83%) report a shortfall of living accommodation, with only 40 municipalities reporting a balance in supply and demand¹¹. It is primarily rental accommodation which is lacking and in particular larger apartments. High production costs in the area of private accommodation and difficulty in obtaining bank loans are cited as contributing factors.

People with low incomes, such as young people and migrants, have a particularly weak position in the housing market. Two hundred and sixty-five municipalities rent apartments to people with special types of rental agreements. These are cases where social services are acting as landlords and provide temporary and short-term living accommodation to groups unable to obtain property in the regular housing market. The latest report from the National Board for Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*)

refers to almost 90% of Swedish municipalities providing housing and the total number of apartments provided by social services is approximately 25,000¹². There is often a background of low income, debt or social and mental health problems accompanying these groups¹³. The public housing sector in Sweden represents almost 20% of the total housing stock and half of the rental sector¹⁴.

Quality of social services

Integrated services

One of the most important developments moving towards integrated services is a government directive from the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Socialstyrelsen* and *Skolverket*) to develop coordination of services at an early stage for children and young people¹⁵. This three-year development programme, between 2017-2020, looks at ongoing issues, legal considerations and good practice. The development programme includes looking at 36 different development projects throughout Sweden.

Workforce

Recruitment is difficult for social services both in terms of qualified and experienced staff. In its 2018 report, the largest public employment trade union 'Vision' highlights that over 50% of directors of social services point to difficulties in recruiting staff, which is an increase compared to 2017¹⁶. The most difficult area of recruitment is for team leaders in childcare protection services. Seventy-five per cent of directors point to a continued need to use agency staff, which leads to problems of continuity and development of competence within the organisation¹⁷. Agency staff are mainly used in child protection as well as assessment positions in the areas of care for older people and for people with disabilities¹⁸.

Government measures were in force between 2017 to 2019 to increase recruitment of social services staff and encourage increased training and stability¹⁹, including 210 million SEK (€19,730,000) allocated annually to increase staffing levels and 40 million SEK (€3,760,000) allocated annually to improve quality and increase stability. Other national measures included the appointment of a national coordinator for childcare services (a time-limited appointment) and there is a current revision of social services legislation which is due to provide a final report 1 June 2020²⁰.

UNITED KINGDOM



Recommendation:

Start a consultation with the public on priorities of social care to come up with adequate and sustainable funding to meet an increasing number of people's needs in the way they want. This is essential to ensure the necessary recruitment and retaining of a caring, skilled and valued workforce, and a vibrant care market which gives people choice and control. The current social care model is antiquated and unsustainable, with costs and expectations out of sync with funding and delivery structures. It is in urgent need of modernisation.

Poverty & Social Protection

The proportion of children living in poverty in England is rising, in particular in-work poverty, with at least one person working in 66% of households where children live in relative poverty¹. Multiple sources point to national government policy as a key driver of the rising poverty, which is putting pressure on social services. According to the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), poverty as a result of welfare reforms is one of the biggest changes reported by children's social services as is increasing food bank referrals². They also report that the proportion of referrals to children's social care based on abuse and neglect has doubled in the last 10 years³.

The other key risk group are the elderly. Age UK reports⁴ that 16% of pensioners live in relative poverty, with numbers rising since 2015. Those aged 80-84 year-olds are at the highest risk (19%). The risk for private tenants is 34%, while for older people from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities it is 29%, according to the charity. Social protection for the elderly represents the largest portion of UK spending, but issues in social services are nonetheless crucial.

Public social services underfunding

The rise in poverty and social exclusion is compounded by systemic underfunding of social services. In England, the Local Government Association (LGA) estimates that the funding gap for adult social care will reach GBP 3.6bn and for children's services GBP 3bn by 2025⁵. Overall, investments in social services are focused on improving patient flow in care. Without sustainable funding, local authorities struggle to invest in prevention, care integration, greater people's autonomy or wellbeing.

In Scotland too there have been significant savings measures, with savings targets for care authorities responsible for integrating care set at 8.4% even as demand rises. Austerity has significantly impacted social services, and despite efforts for service reform and integration, Audit Scotland has frequently noted that the funding strain makes meaningful change difficult⁶.

Service integration

In England, there have been efforts to integrate the fragmented social protection system with the Universal Credit reform, which combined six different working-age, means-tested benefits into one. However, the Public Accounts Commons Select Committee report on the impact of Universal Credit⁷ found that the reform had led beneficiaries to debt, rent arrears, potential homelessness and increasing use of food banks.

The government published the National Health Service (NHS) long-term plan, which outlines the vision and future for universal health services in England for the next 10 years. The aim is to integrate secondary and primary health care whilst also recommending the integration of some social care services at a neighbourhood level⁸. The Social Care Green Paper was expected alongside the NHS long term plan but has yet to be published. Efforts to drive integrated working have been locally led. For example, a system-wide approach across Greater Manchester, pooled budgets in Plymouth⁹, and joint work with housing providers in Dorset, Oxford and Swindon¹⁰ to help people with learning disabilities live more independently. However, there has been little mention of children's services as an area for service integration.

In Scotland, integration of health and social care has progressed since the Public Bodies Act 2014, which mandated integration of local authority and NHS adult health and social care functions into Integration Authorities or Health and Social Care Partnerships. According to Audit Scotland, this has meant some improved collaboration in service delivery (in particular in allowing more people to spend the end of their lives at home, rather than in hospital), but some barriers remain. These are lack of collaborative leadership, limited authority and capacity of the Integrated Authority, a paucity of good strategic planning as well as inadequate links between housing and health and social care services¹¹.

There has also been a stronger focus on integrated early years' support and trauma prevention for children. However, the expansion of national schemes (such as the Family Nurse Partnership, Baby Box¹²) has occurred in parallel with reductions in local authority funding and increased pressure on local services due to demographic and socio-economic developments. As highlighted above and noted by Audit Scotland, there is a limit to what structural change can achieve without growth in capacity and spending¹³.

Housing and homelessness

In response to rising levels of homelessness, local authorities in England have been given a new duty to prevent homelessness with additional funding, which most have used to invest in additional advice and support staff and in schemes such as Housing First¹⁴. In Scotland, local authorities also have a duty to reduce homelessness. In 2018 evictions increased by 3%¹⁵, likely due to the Universal Credit welfare reforms, and Shelter Scotland indicated in a report¹⁶ that homelessness was on the rise for the first time in 9 years.

Policy responses included a duty on landlords to notify authorities if someone is at risk of homelessness due to pending evictions. Local authorities employ Housing Options information with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention. From April 2019, Housing First is being rolled out in Scotland, with a target to house 830 people by the end of the programme. Whilst the new early intervention measures of Housing Options and Housing First are a good step towards prevention and integrated solutions, they do not necessarily address the root causes of homelessness, such as the impact of welfare reforms, austerity and fragmentation on public services. In addition, housing supply simply cannot meet the demand, and so local authorities' obligation to prevent homelessness leads to in long stays in temporary accommodation.

Quality of social services

Quality standards

Both England and Scotland have centrally agreed standards against which all health and social care providers are inspected. In England by the Care Quality Commission and in Scotland by National Health and Social Care Standards.

In England, social care is heavily dependent on private providers, making the system vulnerable to provider failures such as Allied Health Care in 2018, as demonstrated in the ADASS budget survey¹⁷. Despite the pressures, services perform well - four fifths of providers inspected were rated good or outstanding, and only 1% were found to be inadequate. Quality of care has been maintained but the fragility and regional differences in access to care across the country remain an issue.

Workforce gaps

One of the most critical challenges for social services in England and Scotland is workforce recruitment and retention. In England, the most urgent area is children's services, with the National Audit Office reporting that 35% of social workers leave children's services within two years¹⁸. Annual reporting from Skills for Care¹⁹ shows that turnover rate in English adult social care services is at 30%, and 25% of staff are on zero hours contracts. The issues in recruitment are evident in the vacancy rate of 8%, or around 110,000²⁰. With 8% of staff coming from the EU, the expected reduction in migration after Brexit is also likely to exacerbate recruitment issues.

Reference Group on the European Semester

Public social services play a key role in the implementation of European initiatives at local level, in particular the European Pillar of Social Rights, and their contribution to the European Semester is vital for monitoring the implementation progress. ESN Reference Group on the European Semester supports the European Commission in addressing key issues for social services at national level and contributes to the development of policies tackling poverty, growing inequalities and support for vulnerable people in our societies.

In 2019, the Group's analysis focused on three main issues for social services: poverty and social protection, housing and homelessness and social services quality. Each country profile provides an overview of these issues and highlights specific policy recommendations from the perspective of local social services.

Integrated support to promote social inclusion

The Group reviewed the adequacy of social protection systems for different population groups. Support for vulnerable people comes mainly from cash transfers while there is very little investment in the provision of individualised and integrated services. This report provides specific examples for the long-term unemployed and the homeless. Nonetheless, there is increasing awareness of the need for further and improved cooperation in many countries. Issues that need improvement include the need for effective integrated case management with information for users and clear distribution of roles between professionals. Data protection issues and the improvement of legislation to facilitate integration are also crucial. Finally, different services, funding streams and government competences limit integrated services.

Investing in the workforce crucial to improve social services quality

Among the elements identified by the Group, quality of social services depends greatly on its workforce. Investing in the social services workforce is key to guarantee the quality of social services. Social workers need to be given more time to do relational work with people using services to achieve better results. The Group noted that there is still a lack of standardisation of skills and training for social work professionals. In several countries, the sector is facing a tremendous recruitment challenge with not enough professionals, mainly due to poor working conditions and funding, which should be jointly tackled at national and European levels, as highlighted by ESN in our 2017 workforce report.

Looking forward

Based on this year's analysis, the Group would like the European Commission to focus on the following key items to support the work of local social services:

- **Workforce:** establish the mutual recognition of social work qualifications across the EU to enhance support for social workers to work in other Member States
- **Care Guarantee:** provide support to different vulnerable population groups as suggested by ESN ahead of the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights. A Care Guarantee would complement other European initiatives like the Recommendation on Investing in Children, the Youth Guarantee, initiatives on long-term care and the European Disability Strategy
- **Social Services Quality:** promote a review of the social services quality framework based on a new definition of quality that focuses not only on accessibility but also on outcomes, and the capacity of people to live an independent life in their communities.



Annex: Relevant social policies at regional level in Spain

	Asturias	Basque Country	Catalonia	Galicia	Madrid	Navarra
Support for households with dependent children	Drafted bill to provide coverage for people of special vulnerability. New minimum income scheme specifically addresses the needs of households with children.	The Basque Government has proposed to expand the amount families with children receive under the income guarantee benefit. Furthermore, the Basque Country has a new Family and Childhood Plan.	The Catalan Government has approved the Interdepartmental Plan for Supporting Families until 2021, which includes programmes and actions of the various ministries in family policy. The investment in policies addressed to families will be more than € 700 million.	Galicia has increased financial benefits for foster families, increased 5% the supplement for families with dependent children receiving minimum income and increased flexibility in access to social inclusion aid for families with dependent children.	The Social Inclusion Strategy, the Family Support Strategy and the Plan for Children and Adolescents include different planning instruments and initiatives for the inclusion of families with children..	Navarra regulated the right to Social Inclusion and Guaranteed Income with the purpose of combating poverty, especially children's poverty and improving social inclusion and labour market integration for the most vulnerable. It also guarantees the right to a minimum income.
Support for unaccompanied children	Protocol with the steps to follow once an unaccompanied child is received in the autonomous community, from housing to training and permanence in the protection system.		Catalonia has a strategy for the reception, inclusion and empowerment of unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents in the protection system.	Galicia has increased the economic benefit for families to foster unaccompanied children and started initiatives for young people leaving care.	Twelve more residential centres and resources have been specifically allocated to target unaccompanied children in the municipalities of the region.	In Navarra a specific network dealing with resources for unaccompanied migrant children has been set up prioritising their education, training and the study of Spanish.
Implementation of law on dependency & personal autonomy		In the Basque Country, the provincial councils are responsible for the management of the dependency service system. These have applied less restrictive regulations than those established by the central government, given their smaller economic availability.		Spending on social services for dependency care in 2018 amounted to more than 270 million euros. Lack of adequate state funding is still the main obstacle for the fulfilment of the Dependency and Personal Autonomy Act of 2006.	Lack of adequate state funding is still the main obstacle for the fulfilment of the Dependency and Personal Autonomy Act of 2006.	
Regional minimum income schemes	Asturias' draft bill foresees basic social salaries to be eventually complemented with additional benefits.	The Basque income guarantee system is one of the most solid and advanced within the Spanish framework.	Catalonia guarantees a citizenship income which consists of both unconditional and conditional benefits.	The 2013 Social Inclusion Act foresees a basic benefit, inclusion and transition support.	A law of 2001 foresees financial benefits and personalised support for labour and social inclusion.	The law of 2006 guarantees the right to social inclusion and basic income.
Ensuring social services quality at regional level	Asturias is working on a new law for social services.	There is still no High Social Services Inspectorate or Social Services Observatory, as established by law.		2008 social services legislation includes a chapter dedicated to the regulation of social services quality.	Legislation from 2017 establishes the right to social services quality.	Navarra's Strategic Plan for Social Services includes the right to social services quality.



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3. Latvian Government (2019). [Plāna projekts 'Plāns minimālo ienākumu atbalsta sistēmas pilnveidošanai 2019.-2020.gadam'](#) (Draft Plan to improve the minimum income support system for 2019-2020)
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2. Parliament of Lithuania (2018) [Lietuvos Respublikos jaunimo politikos pagrindų įstatymo](#) (Law on Youth Policy Framework)
3. Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Department of Youth Affairs (2018) [2018 m. valstybinių ir kitų institucijų atlikti tyrimai susiję su jaunimu](#) (2018 youth and government studies)
4. Statistics Lithuania (2019) [Skurdo rizikos rodikliai](#) (Poverty Risk Indicators)
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5. Eurostat (2019). [Employment rate by sex, age group 20-64](#)
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7. The Department of Social Security (2019) [Disability Assurances](#)
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9. Housing Authority (2019). [More Social Housing](#)
10. Sustainable Communities (2019). [Housing for Tomorrow](#)

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2. Euractiv Romania (2017). [Copiii din România sunt cei mai expuși riscului sărăciei și excluziunii sociale din UE](#) (Children in Romania are most exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU).
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7. Institute for Labour and Family Research (2015). [Ľudia bez domova: príprava a realizácia empirického výskumu, analýza nástrojov prevencie a riešenia bezdomovectva](#) (Homeless people: preparation and implementation of empirical research, analysis of prevention tools and addressing homelessness).
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2. Minimum Income Scheme in Slovenia.
3. Ministry of Labour, Family, social affairs and equal opportunities (2019). [Hitrejša aktivacija prejemnikov denarne socialne pomoči](#) (Faster activation of recipients of financial social assistance).
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6. See above.
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SPAIN

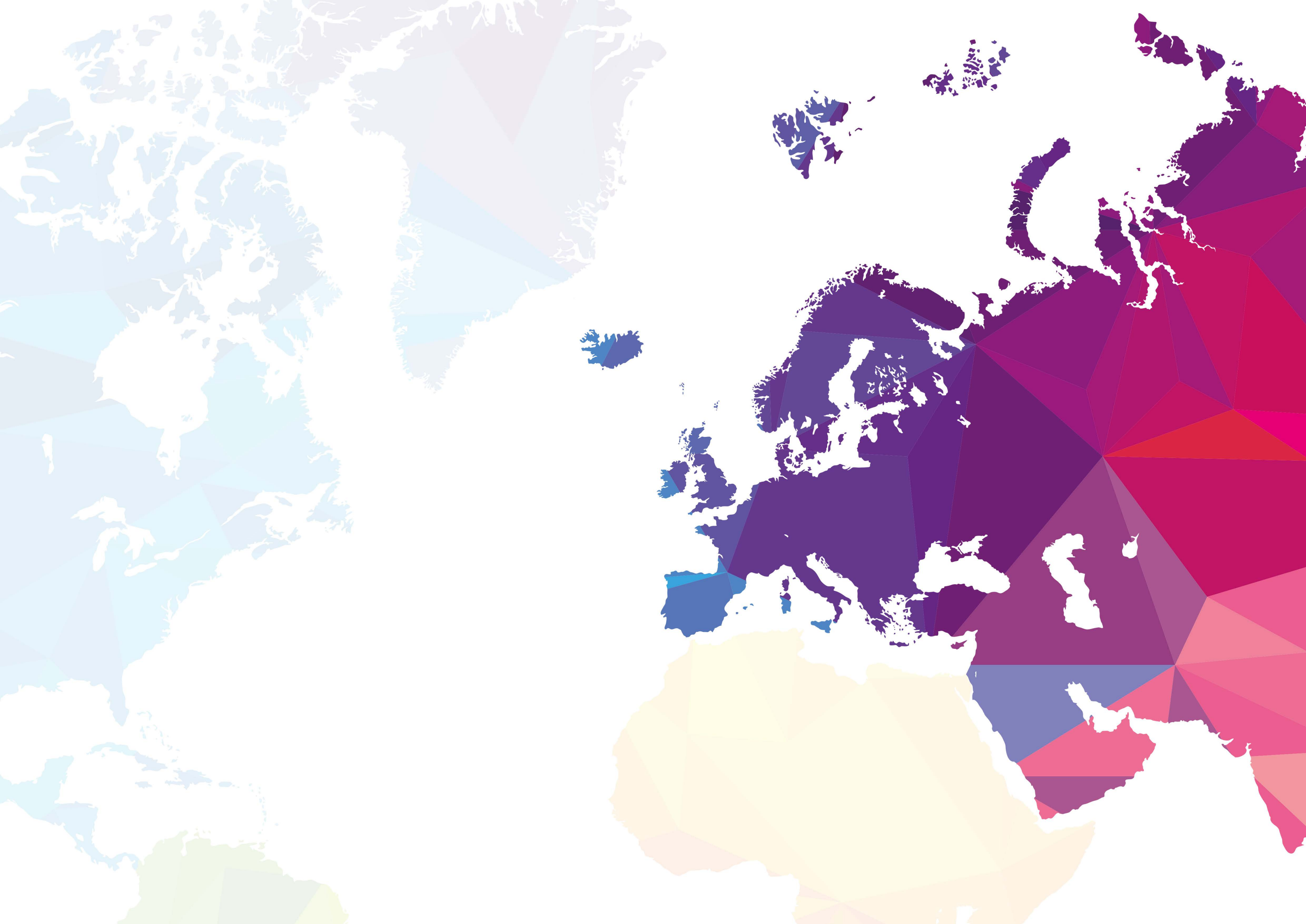


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2. Spanish Government (2018). [Plan de Choque por el Empleo Joven 2019-2021](#)
3. General Council for Social Work (2019). [III Informe de los servicios sociales en España](#) (III Report on social services in Spain).
4. National Statistical Institute (2019). [Encuesta de Población Activa](#).
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7. Registro de MENAS del Ministerio del Interior/Register of unaccompanied migrant children Ministry for Home Affairs.
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9. National Statistical Institute (2017). [Empleo de las personas con discapacidad - Año 2017](#) (Employment rates of people with disabilities – Year 2017).
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14. Regional Government of Asturias (2019) [Marco funcional](#). (Map of processes and the map of systems for the design of an action plan)

UNITED KINGDOM



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2. Association of Directors of Children's Services (2018). [ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 6.](#)
3. See above.
4. Age UK (2018). [Poverty in Later Life.](#)
5. Local Government Association (2018). The lives we want to lead. [The LGA green paper for adult social care and wellbeing](#) & National Audit Office (2019). [Pressures in children's social care.](#)
6. Audit Scotland (2018). [Social Work in Scotland: Impact Report.](#)
7. UK Parliament (2018). [Public Accounts Commons Select Committee: Universal credit.](#)
8. National Health Service England (2019). [NHS Long term Plan.](#)
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10. See above.
11. Audit Scotland (2018). [Health and Social Care Integration: Update on Progress.](#)
12. Family Nurse Partnership is a licensed programme, originally developed in the USA, in which specially trained nurses work with first-time teenage mothers to develop their parenting capacity and support them to make positive choices for themselves and their children. Baby Box is a Scottish Government initiative (based on a Finnish scheme) to provide all new parents with the essentials needed to provide nurturing, safe care to their new baby (such as clothes, a blanket, a bath towel, a baby wrap, toys, bibs, an ear thermometer and nursing pads).
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14. A scheme which offers mainstream housing with wraparound support as a first response. For more information, visit: Homeless Hub (2019). [Housing first.](#)
15. Scottish Government (2019). [Housing Statistics for Scotland](#) (Table of evictions [...] against local authority tenants)
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