



# EPR Public Affairs e-bulletin

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European Platform for Rehabilitation, Avenue des Arts 8, c/o CCI, B-1210, Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 736 54 44, Fax: +32 2 736 8622, Website: [www.epr.eu](http://www.epr.eu)

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## Social Affairs & Social Services

### Draft Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023

The Council of Europe Unit on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is opening public consultations on the draft Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023. The draft has been prepared by the Task Force of the intergovernmental Ad Hoc Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CAHDPH-TF) and in cooperation and consultation with the relevant entities within the Council of Europe. The document is not legally binding, but it is an influential tool to be implemented by the governments of all 47 Council of Europe Member States.

Read the draft at [http://www.coe.int/t/DG3/DISABILITY/consultation2016\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/DG3/DISABILITY/consultation2016_en.asp)

### Social Agenda n°44– Integrating refugees

Ahead of the European Commission adopting an action plan on the integration of third country nationals (i.e. from outside the EU), this new issue of Social Agenda looks at the refugee issue from an employment, social affairs and inclusion angle. It also deals with other very topical issues such as the targeted review of the 1996 posting of workers directive, the on-going public consultation on an outline of the future pillar of social rights for the Euro zone, the new European Commission approach to dialogue with civil society and how the EU Youth Guarantee is working in practice.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2548&furtherNews=yes>

### Update on social policies in Lithuania, Luxembourg and Portugal

Three new Flash Reports prepared by the European Social Policy Network (ESPN) are now available and provide information on debates about childcare reforms in Lithuania, a new rent subsidy in Luxembourg and draft regulations in Portugal to protect families from losing their homes.

- In the fall of 2015, the Lithuanian media reported some cases of child abuse in children's residential care homes which reignited discussions about reforming and deinstitutionalising residential childcare in the country. While a reform of residential childcare started in 2003, there has been no systemic change over the past decade and the reform process continues to meet direct and indirect resistance, partly from the public at large.
- In Luxembourg, the Individual Rent Subsidy Act came into force this year on 1 January in response to the country's booming rent prices and limited social housing availability. The measure is an important step forward, but NGOs and grassroots organisations point to some inconsistencies and questionable criteria which are likely to create problems for the most vulnerable people.
- Since 2012, the Portuguese tax administration has seized over 60 thousand homes due to tax debts. The Portuguese Parliament is currently drafting legislation to protect families' permanent dwellings from repossession during tax execution procedures. While this is an important policy development given the need to keep people housed in

a context of socio-economic hardship, the regulation must be carefully designed and monitored if it is to be effective.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2522&furtherNews=yes>

## Peer Review in Belgium: Housing First

Belgium introduced the 'Housing First' (HF) model in eight cities to support homeless people with special needs: homeless people move into permanent housing as quickly as possible, and receive intensive social support in their homes whenever needed. The setting of HF within Belgium's governmental structure encouraged cities to take a strong 'bottom-up' approach, and to network and share experiences with other cities. Independent evaluations have shown that the HF group had improved housing retention and health in comparison to other groups of homeless people. Tenants also reported a growth in self-esteem, and an improvement in social inclusion. Peer countries: Austria - Denmark - Finland - France - Hungary - Italy - Luxembourg - Netherlands - Norway – Spain.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2338&furtherNews=yes>

## Peer Review in Germany: Active Ageing Index at the local level

The Active Ageing Index (AAI) measures to what extent the potential of older people is used to contribute to the economy and society through paid and unpaid activities and through living independent, healthy and safe lives. Developed within a joint management project of the European Commission and the UN Economic Commission for Europe, the AAI was first applied to EU Member States at the national level in 2012. This Peer Review discussed the possible application of the AAI at local level and was held in Germany which has been piloting a feasibility study on calculating an AAI at the local level. Peer countries: Estonia - Finland - Italy - Malta - Poland - Romania – Spain.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2333&furtherNews=yes>

## Ambitious French Act on adapting society to an ageing population

A new Flash Report prepared by the European Social Policy Network (ESPN) has just become available and provides information on the ambitious French Act on adapting society to an ageing population. Beginning 2016, the Act on adapting society to an ageing population entered into force marking a turning point in long-term care policies in France which traditionally focused on the dependency of the elderly.

The reform intends to meet the rapidly increasing demand for long-term care in France through a comprehensive, cross-cutting approach which is based on three pillars:

1. Anticipating loss of autonomy by better meeting the demands of the elderly in terms of housing, transport, social and civic life, and in doing so preventing and combating their isolation.

2. Adapting society to ageing by measures such as adjusting 80,000 private houses by 2017, renovating residence accommodation for independent living and encouraging seniors to become involved in volunteering activities.
3. Support for older people facing loss of autonomy so that they can stay at home as long as possible. This pillar also includes a reform of the “personal independence allowance” (Allocation personnalisée d'autonomie - APA) and measures to support informal carers.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2528&furtherNews=yes>

## Employment & Disability

### **US Labor Department, European Commission roundtable addresses ways to help the long-term unemployed get back to work**

The European Commission and the U.S. Department of Labor compared practices and policies used to fight against long-term unemployment at a roundtable discussion in Washington on May 11.

[U.S. Deputy Secretary of Labor Christopher P. Lu](#) hosted the event and was joined by [Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen](#), who headed a delegation of representatives of the European Commission, labor ministries and public employment services from several EU Member States. Deputy Secretary Lu was joined by representatives from the department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs, Employment and Training Administration, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of the Chief Economist and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy.

The roundtable offered the leaders opportunities to exchange policy approaches and best practices in combating long-term unemployment. On May 6, 2016, [U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez](#) announced the nation's unemployment rate had fallen to 5 percent with two-thirds of the rate's decline in the last year coming from the ranks of the long-term unemployed. In the EU, long-term unemployment decreased in 2015 by 1.2 million, a 10 percent improvement compared to 2014. EU and U.S. leaders discussed the progress made and the need for concerted action to reduce long-term unemployment, including strong partnerships between business, local governments and community organizations.

Read more: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_STATEMENT-16-1756\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-16-1756_en.htm)

### **The return of the older worker**

The activity (or participation) rate measures the share of working-age people who are in the labour force, including both those in employment and unemployment. There has been a constant growth in activity rates among developed countries during the last decades. The EU used to trail the US and some other developed economies in terms of activity rates, and in 2006, there was a gap of around 5 percentage points between the US and the EU. However, this gap has disappeared by the third quarter of 2015, due to falling activity rates in the US and an increase by 3 percentage points in the EU. The rise in the activity rate in the EU occurred in spite of the crisis which led to considerable job

losses and a big increase in unemployment. It was the result of older workers staying in the labour force: the activity rate of older workers, those above 55 years old increased by almost 10 percentage points since 2008. The higher participation of older workers compensated the decrease of around 3 percentage points among young people (15-24 years) and the stagnation of the activity rate of the prime working-age population (25-54 years).

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2523&furtherNews=yes>

## Education & Vocational Training

### **EU making solid progress towards key targets on early school leaving and tertiary education**

New data from Eurostat, the EU's statistics office, shows that, on average, EU countries are on track to meet education targets for early school leaving and tertiary education. 2015 saw an improvement in early school leaving, as the rate dropped to 11.0% of the population aged 18-24 from a 2014 figure of 11.2%. The share of early leavers was lower for females than males in almost all EU countries. There are already 17 EU countries below the Europe 2020 target of 10% and 12 below their respective national target. Despite the slight progress on average across Europe, in 14 countries the share of early school leavers increased compared to 2014. The new data shows that the share of people aged 30-34 with a tertiary education degree rose by 8 decimal points from 37.9% in 2014 to 38.7% in 2015. 17 EU countries have already hit the Europe 2020 target of 40%, while 12 have reached their respective national target. However, in a few countries, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Luxembourg and Spain, the situation has worsened with respect to 2014.

Read more: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2016/0428-european-targets-for-education\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2016/0428-european-targets-for-education_en.htm)

## Health & Medical Rehabilitation

### **14 new primary health care centres to be built across Ireland, supported by the Investment Plan for Europe**

Fourteen new Primary Care Centres are to be built across Ireland following a new EUR 70 million, 27-year loan from the European Investment Bank. The loan benefits from support from the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Investment Plan for Europe. This project represents the EIB's first support for healthcare investment in Ireland and the first dedicated backing for Primary Health Care anywhere in Europe by the EIB. The new PPP-based scheme will support the shift from hospital based healthcare to community based care closer to patients.

The new Primary Care Centres are to be built in western Ireland in Sligo, Roscommon, Mayo and Galway, in Limerick, in Waterford, Tipperary and Wexford in the south, as well as Kildare and Dublin. They will provide basic health services including GP surgeries, occupational therapy, social work and dietary advice. In some locations additional services will also be provided, including mental health, dentistry and addiction services and a local

ambulance base. A total of 150 primary care centres are already operational or nearly operational across the country.

This is the second healthcare project to be backed by the new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Investment Plan. EFSI was established a year ago by the European Investment Bank and the European Commission to enable increased lending crucial projects by the European Investment Bank in strategic sectors such as renewable energy, digital infrastructure, social infrastructure, transport and R&D; as well as financing for SMEs.

Read more: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-16-1903\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1903_en.htm)

## Research & Development

### Commission welcomes agreement to make public sector websites and apps more accessible

Negotiators of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agreed tonight on the first EU-wide rules to make the websites and mobile apps of public sector bodies more accessible, especially for the blind, the deaf and the hard of hearing.

The internet has become an essential way to access and provide information and services. It is therefore more important than ever to make sure that everyone can perceive and understand websites and mobile apps, and interact with them properly.

Around 80 million people in the EU are affected by a disability. As the EU population ages, the figure is expected to increase to 120 million by 2020. A common approach to ensure web accessibility will contribute to an inclusive digital society and to unlocking the benefits of the [Digital Single Market](#), for all European citizens.

The Directive will cover public sector bodies' websites and mobile apps, from administrations, courts and police departments to public hospitals, universities and libraries. It will make them accessible for all citizens - in particular for the blind, the hard of hearing, the deaf, and those with low vision and with functional disabilities.

Following the political agreement (in 'trilogue', between negotiators of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission), the text will have to be formally approved by the European Parliament and the Council. After that it will be published in the [Official Journal](#) and will officially enter into force. Member States will have 21 months to transpose the text into their national legislation.

Read more: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-16-1654\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1654_en.htm)

### Digital technologies and social innovation trigger the success of social services

A social enterprise recruits homeless people to work as tourist guides and uses the web to raise awareness about homelessness. Another one supports welfare beneficiaries by training selected individuals living with long-term conditions to help others with similar needs through a dedicated online platform. Governments have introduced telecare in health and social services or have developed intelligent systems for improving the prediction of demand and providing personalised services.



These are real examples of how social innovation and digital technologies are supporting EU citizens and enhancing social services.

According to the [JRC's new study](#), the success of these initiatives relies on the catalytic effect of technology to unleash the potential of social innovation. The study was released on 17 May to coincide with the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, dedicated to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) entrepreneurship for social impact. This study is the result of a successful collaboration with the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

Findings also show that participation of the public sector at different levels and its capacity to create partnerships across sectors are instrumental in achieving profound changes in how services are provided.

Neither private nor civil society organisations can achieve alone as much as they can when pooling resource together with mainstream public service providers. Overall, countries where the public sector plays a leading role tend to perform better in delivering positive outcomes.

## Other relevant EU Affairs

### **Spring 2016 European Semester package: Commission issues country-specific recommendations**

Member States are making progress with reforms and addressing macroeconomic imbalances, but more is needed to consolidate Europe's recovery. The European Commission today proposes its 2016 **country-specific recommendations (CSRs)**, setting out its economic policy guidance for individual Member States for the next 12 to 18 months. In addition to efforts already identified and ongoing at [European level](#), this guidance focuses on priority reforms to strengthen the recovery of Member States' economies by [boosting investment, implementing structural reforms and pursuing fiscal responsibility](#).

The CSRs also reflect the Commission's efforts to make the European Semester of economic governance more effective and relevant. The Commission has this year proposed fewer recommendations with a focus on key economic and social priorities identified in its Annual Growth Survey 2016. To strengthen national ownership, it has provided more time and more opportunities to engage and communicate with Member States and stakeholders at all levels. It has also added a greater focus on the euro area challenges and on the interdependence between economies, in line with the agreed recommendation for the economic policy of the euro area.

Read more: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-16-1724\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1724_en.htm)

Read also **European Semester 2016 Spring Package explained:**

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-16-1727\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-1727_en.htm)

## New European Platform tackles undeclared work

The European Commission joins forces with Member States and stakeholders in a further step to fight social dumping and to ensure fairness on the European labour market. Today, a new European Platform on undeclared work has been launched. The network aims at turning undeclared into declared work, thus ensuring social protection for millions of Europeans who lose out through various kinds of risky job arrangements, including dependent work relationships hidden as self-employment.

The Platform is composed of the relevant authorities of all Member States and representatives of cross-industry social partners on EU level. Chaired by the Commission, the Platform will discuss ways and means of how to **improve policies and measures** tackling undeclared work, foster **cooperation** between national authorities and other actors, also regarding the cross-border aspects of undeclared work. Additionally, it focuses on increasing public awareness of the issue.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2549&furtherNews=yes>

## Part-time work: A divided Europe

An increasing number of Europeans are working part-time. This can be a positive development if it means that people can choose more freely the balance between work and other pursuits – and between income and leisure – or if it brings employment opportunities to people who were previously excluded from the labour market: such as mothers, older workers, and students. But part-time work also has a downside if it is involuntary or the only available option because of the difficulty of reconciling a 'standard' job with one's private life and family responsibilities. Working part-time can have costs beyond the loss of earnings compared to full-time working: part-time jobs are often of lower quality with lower hourly wages, provide poorer training and career opportunities, and, in the long run, reduce pension entitlements.

This blog post looks at the diversity of part-time working across the EU. The first striking observation is how gendered the phenomenon is. Far more women than men work on a part-time basis. In 2015, on average in the EU, 8.9 per cent of men worked part-time in contrast to 32.1 per cent of women, while the gap has been slowly closing. There is also a clear East-West divide between countries: in Central and Eastern European countries part-time work remains a marginal phenomenon even among women, while the Western countries have embraced it much more widely.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2535&furtherNews=yes>



## EU funded programmes

- Erasmus+ [new calls 2016](#) and [Programme Guide](#)
- DG EMPL – PROGRESS / EaSI [calls](#)
- Horizon 2020 – various [new calls](#)

## Calendar of upcoming events

Date	Title	Venue	Contact
02-03/06/2016	Join the first FEAD Network event!	Brussels	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1109&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1109&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
30/05 – 03/06 2016	Green Week - Twitter Chat #EU4GreenSkills: Investing in green skills is investing for a greener future	Ljubljana (Slovenia)	<a href="http://www.greenweek2016.eu/live">http://www.greenweek2016.eu/live</a>
10/06/2016	2016 Work Forum on the implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities	Brussels	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1112&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1112&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
20/06/2016	New Skills Agenda for Europe - Launch event	Brussels	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1115&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1115&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
24/06/2016	FreSsco seminar: Problems and obstacles in free movement of workers and coordination of social security schemes	Warsaw (Poland)	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1095&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1095&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
05/07/2016	FreSsco seminar: Cross-border migration of workers from Bulgaria	Sofia (Bulgaria)	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1096&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1096&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
08/07/2016	Info Day, Horizon 2020 - 'Health, demographic change and wellbeing'	Brussels	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=events&amp;lg=en&amp;period=2016&amp;theme=0&amp;selectmonth=0&amp;future_epage=6">http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=events&amp;lg=en&amp;period=2016&amp;theme=0&amp;selectmonth=0&amp;future_epage=6</a>
09/09/2016	FreSsco seminar: EU non-discrimination law and intra-EU mobility	Paris (France)	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1097&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1097&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
13/09/2016	FreSsco seminar: Coordination of type-A invalidity benefits	Hungary	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1098&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1098&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
23/09/2016	FreSsco seminar: Selected topics related to intra-EU mobility	Estonia	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1099&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1099&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
26/09/2016	FreSsco seminar: Solidarity and migration	Austria	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1100&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1100&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
13/10/2016	FreSsco seminar: Key issues relating to social security coordination and free movement of workers in Romania	Romania	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1101&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1101&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
28/10/2016	FreSsco seminar: Social tourism within the EU; legal and practical reflections on a political debate	The Netherlands	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1102&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1102&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>
04/11/2016	FreSsco seminar: Recent developments in the coordination of family benefits, unemployment benefits and student aid	Luxembourg	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1103&amp;furtherEvents=yes">http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&amp;catId=88&amp;eventsId=1103&amp;furtherEvents=yes</a>