



PRESS RELEASE
EU Country Specific Recommendations show
Social Europe is still pending

Brussels, 24th May 2017 - As part of the [European Semester framework](#), the European Commission [recently published its sets of annual Country Specific Recommendations](#). These recommendations provide policy guidance tailored to each EU country on how to boost jobs and growth in Europe.

Given the recent presentation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) by the EU Commission, [Mental Health Europe](#) is surprised to see that this year's recommendations have not fully addressed the social elements of the European Semester.

While growth and financial sustainability are important objectives of the EU Semester, it should also be a strong vehicle for implementing the ambitious Social Pillar.

Overall MHE counted 30 positive recommendations on social issues including on investing in a range of services such as employment, housing, education and care services. However, MHE notes that this year's Country Specific Recommendations saw a reduction in health-related recommendations and a complete absence of reference to mental health although access to quality, affordable services in this field, based on choice, are lacking across the EU. Furthermore, no explicit recommendations on disability were issued to Member States even though several of the accompanying reports (Lithuania, Latvia and Romania) noted the high rates of poverty and inequality faced by persons with disabilities.

Overall the social aspect within the recommendations have improved but remain under represented, which begs the question - **how will the EU Semester drive the Social Pillar forward?**

"The European Social Triple A will not happen without greater consideration of today's social challenges and the inclusion of the most marginalised in society, including people living with mental ill health and psychosocial disabilities" says Nigel Henderson, President of Mental Health Europe.

MHE calls on the Commission to increase the number of recommendations that tackle the social challenges facing those living in Europe today in order to mainstream the Social Pillar throughout the European Semester with the following in mind:

- Strike a better balance between fiscal matters and access to social and health services including mental healthcare;
- The need to address the individual barriers facing persons with disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities;
- When assessing sustainability of health systems, stress the importance of achieving good health outcomes as well as cost-effectiveness;
- Do not characterise access to health coverage as a disincentive to work *ie free health coverage to non-working spouses should not be viewed as a disincentive to work.*

"Last January President Juncker said the social pillar might be the last chance to create a more social Europe, therefore the EU Semester must strive to contribute to inclusive growth. Positive social policies and access to social services also have a positive impact on mental health which should not be underestimated in this context." adds Nigel Henderson.

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Note for Editors

Read the 2017 Country Specific Recommendations [HERE](#)

About Mental Health Europe

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is a European non-governmental network organisation committed to the promotion of positive mental health, the prevention of mental distress, the improvement of care, advocacy for social inclusion and the protection of rights for (ex)users of mental health services, their families and carers. Find further information about us at <http://www.mhe-sme.org>

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