# Reports put spotlight on public services and social dialogue in European Semester




(11 April) Two reports published today provide an insight into how the European Semester deals with public service issues and the extent to which trade unions have a role in the process.

The European Semester is the European Union's annual process of economic policy coordination which begins with the Annual Growth Survey (AGS) each November and ends with the European Council agreeing Country Specific Recommendations for all Member States.

Since its inception in 2011, the Semester has been under fire from public service unions for its focus on public spending restraint - fiscal consolidation as the European Commission puts it - and the failure to consult effectively with trade unions. The literature review published today traces the development of these two issues, noting changes in both areas with a rebalancing to towards more social

priorities and a greater involvement of social partners.

This is also reflected in the second report, an analysis of the 2017-18 European Semester cycle. This report follows the process in more detail from the AGS, through the Country Reports (published by the Commission each February), the National Reform Programmes (published by each Member State each April) and the Country Specific Recommendations (drafted by the Commission in May and agreed by the European Council in July).

The 2017-18 is notable for the incorporation of the European Pillar of Social Rights into the process with each Country Report including an assessment of how each Member State measures up. The analysis includes an overview which indicates the extent to which the 2018 Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) address Member States' shortcomings in relation to certain aspects of the Pillar.

While acknowledging a certain shift in the Commission's approach, the analysis still finds that "fiscal responsibility" remains the key message in the main CSRs for a significant number of countries with very few being exhorted to boost public investment. Similarly, while there are references to affordability, access and quality when referring to specific public services such as health care, there is equally a focus efficiency and cost effectiveness.

The two reports are the first key deliverables from the European Commission-funded project - Public Service Trade Unions  - Effective Intervention in the European Semester. The project is being coordinated by EPSU with the support of the ETUCE education federation and research carried out by the University of Nottingham and the European Social Observatory (OSE).

The next stage of the project will see the publication of case studies on five countries - Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy and Latvia - that will be discussed at the next project conference on 1-2 October in Brussels. The launch conference took place last October.

**This project has the financial support of the European Commission**

- Log in to post comments

- European Semester 2017-18
- Literature Review

- Printer-friendly version

Policies
Economic Policy
Sectors
Health and Social Services
Local and Regional Government
National and European Administration