

Poland

Each year, the ESN European Semester Group follows the European Commission's cycle of policy coordination with EU Member States known as the European Semester and produces a report based on a questionnaire completed by public social services authorities on the social situation in European countries with a particular focus on social services. This country profile identifies the most important common challenges facing social services as reported by ESN members in Austria, related to three principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and makes recommendations for the 2023 European Semester. The full report, with cross-country analysis of all the participating countries is available [here](#).

1. Children's services

1.1. Key issues

Respondents highlighted the lack of access to psychological and psychiatric support as the biggest challenge in children's services. Available support to tackle mental health crises is based on hospitalisation instead of community-based services. 80% of municipalities in Poland do not provide socio-therapyservices for young people and children. Yet, in the European Commission's Poland's country report, these challenges are not acknowledged. The respondents highlighted that the family benefits introduced by the national government, including their flagship 500+ programme, have reduced the number of children living in poverty. The availability of childcare is also improving, although it remains exceptionally low in relation to need.

1.2. Recommendations

Implement actions to address children's mental health support, in particular community-based services, and improve cooperation between healthcare, family counselling and schools.

2. Long-term care

2.1. Key issues

Access to long-term care in Poland remains uneven, with rural areas facing a continuing lack of services. There is a lack of an integrated approach in care services delivery, with health and social care operating in almost complete separation. People requiring care services often do not know what support they are entitled to. The state, although still the dominant service provider, is slowly giving way to the private sector, and there are now plans to reform the entire care sector, as part of the strategy for the development of social services. The Strategy places a strong emphasis on deinstitutionalisation, but respondents point out that it is not clear what exactly will replace these institutions. There may be a risk of destroying and further underfunding existing arrangements without first introducing a system of community-based services.

2.2. Recommendations

An integrated system for the provision of long-term care services should be put in place and accompanied by adequate funding. The

creation of comprehensive solutions must be backed by the introduction of appropriate legal changes, which will support providers to create community-based services and enable flexible adaptation of the care offer to the needs of users.

3. Support for homeless people

3.1. Key issues

There is a lack of services tailored to homeless people. Above all, there is a lack of social housing, including shared flats, where people in homelessness crisis could live and be supported on their way to independent living. In Poland, the shelter model of supporting homeless people is still dominant, with most services provided in night shelters.

3.2. Recommendations

Investment in social housing needs to be significantly increased so that homeless people can be accommodated in housing rather than shelters. This development should be accompanied by a network of support services provided around housing.



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