

Slovakia

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

In Slovakia, the rate of child poverty is higher than that of adult poverty, but there is no specific strategy to close the gap. The National Action Plan for Children, which ended in 2017 was the last comprehensive policy framework in this area. However, the respondents underlined that the programme was not effective enough in achieving the targets it set out. A major problem in implementing a comprehensive childcare strategy is the fragmentation of competences between different ministries, and the consequent compartmentalisation of various sectors supporting children, including social services, health and education. However, the Early Childhood Development Strategy adopted in August 2022 by the ministries of social affairs, education and health is a first step in the right direction. Slovakia plans to use EU funds to develop early childhood intervention programmes and support social work in marginalised Roma communities.

1.2 Recommendations

An overarching child support strategy should be adopted to improve the situation of the most vulnerable children in Slovakia. This strategy should involve close cooperation between all authorities responsible for child support and be oriented towards improving coordination between social services. Finally, the strategy should address the needs of children from different backgrounds, including children from Roma communities.

2. Long-term care

2.1 Key issues

The European Commission's Slovakia report does not address challenges related to providing adequate long-term care for an ageing population. The Slovak Government has developed a number of policy documents covering long-term care, including: National priorities for the development of social services

in 2021-2030, a long-term care strategy, and a national strategy on digitalisation of social services with an action plan in 2022-2026. These policies aim at creating the conditions for the provision of community-based social services, so that people can stay in their home and communities for as long as possible, receiving outreach and outpatient services. The Social Services Act emphasises that the priority is to provide community and home-based social services before residential social services. Despite these commitments, respondents noted that changes towards the provision of community-based social services have been very slow and the objectives set out in these documents have not been realised. Respondents underline that the financing of these reforms relies to a large extent on EU Funds, in particular European Social and Investment Funds and the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

2.2. Recommendations

The Slovak Government should fulfil its commitments to develop community-based social services that improve the quality of long-term care. This should be followed by monitoring the implementation of the Slovak's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which includes long-term care reforms among their objectives.

3. Support for homeless people

3.1. Key issues

3.2% of the Slovak face severe housing deprivation.¹ This includes 86,000 Roma that have no access to adequate accommodation and essential service.² In this context, there should be a national homelessness strategy. Respondents pointed out that to be able to access social housing, applicants must earn around the minimum wage, making

homelessness a permanent condition for people who are outside the labour market or working part-time. In consequence, crisis facilities, such as homeless shelters turn into long-term solutions. Housing allowances are dramatically low compared to rental prices and their availability is limited to a very narrow segment of the population. Furthermore, barriers in cooperation between different ministries lead to a lack of effective programmes to address this issue.

3.2. Recommendations

The Social Services Act should be reformed to move from the current crisis intervention model of tackling homelessness to a prevention-oriented approach. This should also include redefining competences between regional and municipal levels and enhancing their cooperation in the delivery of services aimed at populations with housing issues.



Read the report online

Putting People First
Investing in Social
Services. Promoting
Social Inclusion.

1 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_in_Europe_-_housing#Housing_affordability

2 <https://imbbmi.files.wordpress.com/2021/03/atlas-romsky-ch-komunit-2019.pdf>.