

## European Semester 2014

### Summary of Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) and effects on Education and Training

The Commission has published on 2 June the 2014 Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) for each Member State for budgetary, economic and social policies, along with a Communication [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) on What is needed to return to growth and jobs. The Recommendations are a central part of the European Semester mechanism of governance. They are based on an assessment of each Member State's plans for sound public finance (**Stability or Convergence Programmes –SCPs**) and policy measures to boost growth and jobs (**National Reform Programmes –NRPs**).

Furthermore, the Commission has screened the Member States for possible macroeconomic imbalances (**Commission Staff Working Paper**) and for 17 Member States it carried out **In-depth reviews**, also available below for the Member States concerned.

During **June**, national ministers discuss the CSRs. The Council discusses and the European Council endorses the recommendations.

Finally, **end of June - early July**, the Council formally adopts the country-specific recommendations. Policy advice is thus given to Member States before they start to finalise their draft budgets for the following year.

[Overview of EU Country-Specific Recommendations by Member State for 2014-2015](#)

**EU country  
Country-specific Recommendations  
Commission Staff Working Paper  
In-Depth Review  
National documents**

**[Austria](#)**

Commission Recommendation

[DE](#) - [EN](#) - [FR](#)

[Recommendation for a Council Decision  
abrogating Decision 2010/282/EU on the  
existence of an excessive deficit in Austria](#)

**Assessment and Context**

Austria **has improved educational outcomes in all categories, but reading achievements remain** still below the EU average and the socio-economic background continues to have significant influence on educational achievements. While overall the **early school leaving target has been met**, the rate for pupils with a migrant background was more than three times higher than for

**CSR 2014-2015**

- Further improving child- and long-term care services and the **recognition of migrants' qualifications. Improve educational outcomes in particular of young people with a migrant background, by enhancing early childhood education and reducing the negative effects of early tracking.**
- Further **improve strategic planning in higher**

<p>Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - DE</a> National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- DE</a> Annex 1.1 - Measures to address the 2013 CSRs: <a href="#">EN</a> Annex 1.2 - Progress on Europe2020 targets: <a href="#">EN</a> Annex 1.3 - Reform Commitments for 2014: <a href="#">EN</a> Annex 2.1 - Specific measures to address the 2013 CSRs: <a href="#">DE</a> Annex 2.2 - Measures contributing to the national 2020 targets: <a href="#">DE</a> Stability Programme: <a href="#">EN- DE</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Belgium</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation <a href="#">FR - NL - EN - DE</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#">Recommendation for a Council Decision abrogating Decision 2010/283/EU on the existence of an excessive deficit in Belgium</a></p>	<p>those of non-migrant background (21.5 % vs. 6.0 % in 2012).</p> <p>Insufficient emphasis is put on <b>prevention of early school leaving and a nationwide strategic approach for high quality early childhood education</b> still needs to be developed. Some reforms to various aspects of the school system, in particular the roll-out of the New Middle School programme, are on-going or have just been adopted. The <b>potential of New Middle School</b> to mitigate the negative effects of early assignment of pupils to different school types after four years of elementary school ('<b>early tracking</b>') for socially disadvantaged and to improve learning outcomes <b>has to be monitored closely</b>.</p> <p>In <b>higher education</b>, increasing numbers of enrolled students put pressure on finances and organisation, while the percentage of students completing their programmes remains below EU-average. <b>Improving educational outcomes remain</b> highly important <b>in order to facilitate the pathway from education to employment</b>.</p> <p>Youth unemployment has increased significantly over the past year, with large differences across the regions and groups. <b>Addressing the structural problem of skills mismatches will have to go hand in hand with fighting the pressing problem of early school leaving and of youngsters leaving education without qualifications</b>.</p>	<p><b>education and enhance measures to reduce dropouts.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increase labour market participation,</li> <li>– <b>Improving professional mobility and addressing skills shortages and mismatches as well as early school leaving.</b> Across the country, strengthen partnerships of public authorities, public employment services and education institutions to <b>provide early and tailor-</b></li> </ul>
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<p>Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - FR - NL</a>  In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a>  National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- FR - NL</a>  Stability Programme: <a href="#">FR- NL</a></p> <p><b><u>Bulgaria</u></b></p> <p>Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">BG - EN - FR - DE</a>  Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - BG</a>  In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a>  National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- BG</a>  Convergence Programme: <a href="#">EN- BG</a></p>	<p>Bulgaria faces one of the highest proportions of young people who are neither in employment, education nor training, implying a severe underutilisation and <b>underdevelopment of human capital</b>.</p> <p>Bulgaria has still not adopted the School Education Act providing a framework for implementation of the necessary comprehensive reforms of the school system, including the <b>modernisation of curricula and the improved training for teachers</b>.</p> <p>There is a need <b>to enhance the quality of vocational education and training</b> in Bulgaria and to <b>integrate it better into the general educational structures</b> so as to <b>allow for flexible pathways, reduce early school leaving and improve access to lifelong learning</b>.</p> <p><b>Higher education</b>, in turn, faces persisting <b>challenges in responding better to labour market needs</b>. The low standard of quality certification contributes to poor performance.</p>	<p><b>made support to the young.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Restore competitiveness by (...) pursuing <b>coordinated education and training policies</b> addressing the <b>pervasive skills mismatches</b> and regional disparities in <b>early school leaving</b>.</li> <li>– Extend the coverage and effectiveness of active labour market policies to match the profiles of job-seekers, and reach out to non-registered young people who are neither in employment, education or training, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee.</li> <li>– Adopt the School Education Act and pursue the <b>reforms of vocational and higher education</b> in order to increase the level and relevance of skills acquired at all levels, while <b>fostering partnerships between educational institutions and business</b> with a view to <b>better aligning outcomes to labour market needs</b>.</li> <li>– <b>Strengthen the quality of vocational education and training institutions and improve access to life-long learning</b>.</li> <li>– Step up efforts to <b>improve access to quality inclusive pre-school</b> and school education of disadvantaged children, in particular Roma, and implement strictly the rules linking the payment of child allowance to participation in education</li> </ul>
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	<p>A new strategy on higher education is being discussed, calling for <b>the restructuring of university management through the direct involvement of interested stakeholders</b> such as businesses and students, the consolidation of universities, and a <b>performance-based approach to better align educational outputs with the demands of the labour market.</b></p> <p>A continuing <b>challenge concerns the access to education for disadvantaged children</b>, in particular Roma children. The two-year obligatory pre-school is a key measure going in the right direction and should be strictly implemented, together with measures to prevent <b>early school leaving.</b></p> <p>There is a need to scale up existing initiatives to <b>improve the training of teachers</b> and reduce <i>de facto</i> segregation in schools. The rules linking the child allowance with participation in education are not yet effectively implemented.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Croatia</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">HR - EN - FR - DE</a>  <a href="#">Communication from the Commission - Assessment of action taken by CROATIA in response to the Council Recommendation of 28 January 2014 with a view to bringing an end to the situation of excessive</a></p>	<p>The situation on the labour market is of particular concern for young people as their unemployment increased drastically and reached almost 50% in 2013, while the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training keeps increasing.</p> <p>Important challenges include outreach to non-registered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Prioritise outreach to nonregistered youth and <b>mobilise the private sector to offer more apprenticeships</b>, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee.</li> <li>– Outline plans, by the end of 2014, to address undeclared work. Implement measures to improve the labour market relevance and <b>quality of education</b></li> </ul>

<p><a href="#">government deficit</a> Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN</a> - <a href="#">HR</a> In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a> National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN</a>- <a href="#">HR</a> Annex - Tables accompanying the National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN</a> Convergence Programme: <a href="#">HR</a></p>	<p>youth and <b>mobilisation of the private sector to offer more apprenticeships</b>, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee.</p> <p>Croatia also faces serious <b>challenges in education</b> as regards <b>labour-market relevance and quality of provision across all educational sectors</b>.</p> <p>Work-based learning and <b>career guidance across secondary and tertiary education are lacking while employers' engagement with vocational education and training, and secondary and tertiary education is low</b>.</p> <p>Employment rates among recent <b>graduates</b> are significantly lower than in the rest of the EU.</p> <p>The outdated <b>vocational education and training system</b> is undergoing a reform in the form of piloting new school curricula. The implementation of the Croatian Qualifications Framework and the Strategy on Education, Science and Technology is pending but should <b>improve educational outcomes</b> and align them with labour market needs.</p>	<p><b>outcomes</b> by modernising the <b>qualification systems</b>, by <b>putting in place quality assurance mechanisms</b> and by <b>improving school-to-work transitions</b>, notably through <b>strengthening vocational education</b> and <b>work based learning</b>.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cyprus</b></p> <p>To avoid duplication with measures set out in the <a href="#">Economic Adjustment Programme</a>, there are no additional recommendations for Cyprus. Commission Staff Working Paper: <a href="#">EN</a> <a href="#">EL</a> National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN</a></p>		

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Czech Republic</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation <a href="#">CS - EN - FR - DE</a> <a href="#">Recommendation for a Council Decision abrogating Decision 2010/284/EU on the existence of an excessive deficit in Czech Republic</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - CS</a> National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- CS</a> Annex 2 - Measures to address the 2013 CSRs: <a href="#">EN- CS</a> Annex 3 - Reform Commitments for 2014: <a href="#">EN -CS</a> Convergence Programme: <a href="#">CS</a></p>	<p>As room for catching-up based on the accumulation of production factors (including foreign capital) appears limited, redirecting the economy towards domestic drivers of growth would open up new avenues to productivity gains. Essential elements of this process include <b>supporting education, training and innovation</b> and strengthening institutions.</p> <p>The <b>quality</b> and <b>labour market relevance</b> of the <b>Czech education system</b> are a cause for concern. Some measures were taken to improve the <b>evaluation framework</b> in the compulsory education, but the follow up with schools and <b>pupils with weaker outcomes</b> remains a challenge.</p> <p>The <b>attractiveness of the teaching professions</b> is also an issue, which the government intends to address.</p> <p>The low participation of Roma children in mainstream inclusive <b>early childhood education</b> and in <b>primary education</b> remains a challenge for their integration.</p> <p>The <b>higher education</b> reform has been delayed and no progress has been made on <b>enhancing accreditation and funding in higher education</b>. Only minor changes were introduced as regards the <b>funding of research institutions</b>. It remains crucial to create the right incentives for <b>public researchers</b> to strive for excellence, address societal challenges, and <b>cooperate with the business sector</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ensure that the <b>accreditation, governance and financing of higher education</b> contribute to <b>improving its quality and labour market relevance</b>.</li> <li>– Accelerate the development and introduction of a <b>new methodology for evaluating research</b> and allocating funding in view of <b>increasing the share of performance-based funding</b> of research institutions.</li> <li>– In <b>compulsory education</b>, make the <b>teaching profession more attractive</b>; implement a comprehensive <b>evaluation framework</b> and <b>support schools and pupils with poor outcomes</b>.</li> <li>– Increase the <b>inclusiveness of education</b>, notably by <b>promoting the participation of socially disadvantaged and Roma children in particular in early childhood education</b>.</li> </ul>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Denmark</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">DA - EN - FR - DE</a>  <a href="#">Recommendation for a Council Decision abrogating Decision 2010/407/EU on the existence of an excessive deficit in Denmark</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - DA</a>          In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a>          National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- DA</a>          Annex 1 - Measures to address the 2013 CSRs: <a href="#">EN</a>          Annex 2 - Quantitative assessment of reforms: <a href="#">EN</a>          Convergence Programme: <a href="#">EN- DA</a></p>	<p>Denmark has not yet made enough progress on addressing the situation for groups at the margins of the labour market as well as <b>advancing the cost-effectiveness of the education system</b>.</p> <p>Challenges remain so as to <b>ensure a sufficient number of apprenticeships and enhance the quality and image of this type of learning, upgrade vocational education and training systems and address high rates of school drop-outs</b>.</p> <p>Due to the early stage of implementation of the reforms, the full effect remains yet to be seen. Regarding <b>vocational education and training</b>, a reform agreement was reached in February 2014 and is expected to come into force in mid-2015, with a <b>view to improving the quality of vocational education and training</b> through a wide range of initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Take further measures to improve the employability of people at the margins of the labour market.</li> <li>– <b>Improve educational outcomes</b>, in particular for young people with a migrant background, and the effectiveness of <b>vocational training</b>.</li> <li>– <b>Facilitate the transition from education to the labour market</b>, including through a wider use of <b>work-based training and apprenticeships</b>.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Estonia</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">ET - EN - FR - DE</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - ET</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- ET</a>          Action Plan 2014-2018: <a href="#">EN- ET</a>          Stability Programme: <a href="#">ET</a></p>	<p>In the field of <b>education and training reforms</b> to align <b>education to the requirements of the labour market</b> have recently been adopted. Further efforts will be necessary to facilitate the transition from education to employment.</p> <p><b>Systematic efforts will be needed, in particular involving social partners, to increase participation in vocational education and training, and in work-based learning, especially apprenticeships</b>. The implementation of the <b>Lifelong Learning Strategy</b> will require serious efforts to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To ensure the <b>labour-market relevance of education and training systems</b>, improve <b>skills' and qualification levels by expanding life-long learning measures and systematically increasing participation in vocational education and training</b>, including in <b>apprenticeships</b>.</li> <li>– Further <b>intensify prioritisation and specialisation in the research and innovation systems</b> and enhance <b>cooperation between businesses, higher education and research institutions</b> to contribute to international competitiveness.</li> </ul>

provide the much-needed **up-skilling, re-skilling** and **qualification levels**, especially for people in a weak position vis-à-vis the labour market.

There is a **smart specialisation framework** that comprises the Entrepreneurship and Growth Strategy and the Research, Development and Innovation Strategy with a focus on shared priorities while further specialising the thematic areas.

Efforts should continue towards the **internationalisation and prioritisation of the research and development and innovation system**, given the small size of the economy.

A more **efficient and accessible delivery of quality public services at local level**, based on service areas and minimum service standards, especially in transport, long-term care, **early childhood education** and social services, is a prerequisite for activation and labour market measures to be effective.

## Finland

Commission Recommendation

[FI - SV - EN - FR - DE](#)

[Report from the Commission - Finland -  
Report prepared in accordance with Article  
126\(3\) of the Treaty](#)

Commission Staff Working Paper [EN - FI - SV](#)

- Improve the labour-market prospects of young people and the long-term unemployed, with a **particular focus on vocational education** and targeted activation measures.

In-depth review [2014](#)  
 National Reform Programme: [EN- FI - SV](#)  
 Stability Programme: [EN- FI - SV](#)

### France

Commission Recommendation  
[FR - EN - DE](#)  
 Commission Staff Working Paper [EN - FR](#)  
 In-depth review [2014](#)  
 National Reform Programme: [FR](#)  
 Stability Programme: [EN- FR](#)

The effectiveness of the existing tools should be further improved in order to trigger **higher R&D expenditures** by **private firms and innovation in the private sector**.

The 2013 Programme for International Student Assessment survey showed that **Educational inequality** in France is amongst the highest in OECD countries. A sixth of young people in France **leave education and training without a qualification**. This is particularly worrying as the unemployment rate of young people was of 25.5% at the end of 2013 and as the **risk of being unemployed was almost two times higher for the least qualified young people**.

Schemes to **promote apprenticeships** should reach in particular the least qualified young people.

Some progress in addressing this issue was made through the launch of the **reform of compulsory education** in July 2013 and the **adoption of a law on vocational education and lifelong learning** in March 2014. However, it is too early to assess whether these measures will effectively **reduce inequalities in the education system** and a **new plan targeting lower-secondary education schools in disadvantaged areas** announced in January 2014, still needs to be implemented.

- Pursue the **modernisation of vocational education and training**, implement the **reform of compulsory education** and take further actions to **reduce educational inequalities** in particular by **strengthening measures on early school leaving**. Ensure that active labour market policies effectively support the most vulnerable groups.
- Improve the **transition from school to work**, notably by stepping up measures to further **develop apprenticeship with a specific emphasis on the low-skilled**
- Step up **counselling and training for older workers** and re-assess the relevant specific unemployment benefit arrangements. *(Internal: This recommendation does not concern education and training but social protection measures)*

	<p>Lastly, <b>transition from school to work</b> has been facilitated but the <b>number of apprentices decreased</b> in 2012 and the <b>schemes increasingly benefitted students in higher education</b>.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Germany</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation <a href="#">DE - EN - FR</a> Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - DE</a> In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a> National Reform Programme: <a href="#">DE</a> Stability Programme: <a href="#">EN- DE</a></p>	<p>Germany has made <b>limited progress in increasing spending on education</b> and <b>some progress concerning higher research spending</b>. Further efforts appear necessary at all levels of government to meet the target for total public and private expenditure on education and research of 10 % of GDP by 2015, and even more ambitious follow-up targets should be aimed for in order to catch up with the most innovative economies.</p> <p>Germany has made some progress in <b>raising the educational achievement of disadvantaged people</b>, but the link between educational achievement and socio-economic background remains strong and persists over people's working life. (..)</p> <p>Germany has made some progress in <b>expanding the availability of full-time early childhood education</b> and care places, while progress in the extension of all-day schools has been limited. At the same time, childcare facilities and all-day schools are still the subject of quality concerns and regional disparities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pursue <b>growth-friendly fiscal policy</b> and preserve a sound fiscal position, ensuring that the medium-term budgetary objective continues to be adhered to throughout the period covered by the Stability Programme and that the general government debt ratio remains on a sustained downward path. In particular, use the available scope for increased and <b>more efficient public investment in infrastructure, education and research</b>.</li> <li>– <b>Improve the employability of workers by further raising the educational achievement of disadvantaged people</b> and by implementing more ambitious activation and integration measures in the labour market, especially for the long-term unemployed.</li> <li>– Address regional shortages in the availability of fulltime <b>childcare facilities and all-day schools</b> while <b>improving their overall educational quality</b>.</li> </ul>

## Greece

To avoid duplication with measures set out in the [Economic Adjustment Programme](#), there are no additional recommendations for Greece.

Commission Staff Working Paper : [EN](#)

National Reform Programme: [EN](#)

## Hungary

Commission Recommendation

[HU](#) - [EN](#) - [FR](#) - [DE](#)

Commission Staff Working Paper [EN](#)

In-depth review [2014](#)

National Reform Programme: [EN](#)- [HU](#)

Convergence Programme: [EN](#)- [HU](#)

The youth unemployment rate has decreased in 2013, while the rate of young people who are not in employment, education or training has increased. An efficient coordination of the Public Employment Service branch offices with educational institutions and local stakeholders could increase outreach.

The **proportion of early school leavers is on the rise** and the **adoption of an early school leaving prevention strategy** has been repeatedly delayed. Further efforts are needed to **equip pupils with basic skills, competences and qualifications that are relevant for the labour market**.

Equal access to **mainstream quality education** still remains a major problem **for disadvantaged children**, in particular Roma. **New law on vocational training**, which inter alia introduces a new '**dual model**', has been **enacted to reduce the still-difficult transition from education to the labour market**, the effects of which need to be closely monitored.

- Put in place the **planned youth mentoring network** and **coordinate it with education institutions and local stakeholders** to increase outreach. Review the public works scheme to evaluate its effectiveness in helping people find subsequent employment and further strengthen its activation elements
- Implement a **national strategy on early school leaving prevention** with a focus on **drop-outs from vocational education and training**.
- Put in place a systematic approach to **reducing educational segregation** and to **promote inclusive mainstream education for disadvantaged groups**, in particular Roma.
- **Support the transition between different stages of education and towards the labour market**, and closely monitor the **implementation of the vocational training reform**.
- Implement a **higher-education reform that enables greater tertiary attainment**, particularly by disadvantaged students.



<p>Expenses by Regions and Autonomous Provinces: <a href="#">IT</a>  Strategic Infrastructure Programme: <a href="#">IT</a>  Underdeveloped Areas Programme: <a href="#">IT</a>  Greenhouse Gas Reduction Commitments - update: <a href="#">IT</a></p>	<p>translate into <b>better school outcomes</b>.</p> <p>To ensure a smooth <b>transition between education and the labour market</b>, strengthening and broadening <b>practical training</b>, through <b>increased work-based learning and vocational education and training</b>, appear crucial at the <b>upper secondary and tertiary levels</b>. Following the 2013 legislative decree on this issue, <b>establishing a national register of qualifications is essential</b> in order to ensure the <b>nation-wide recognition of skills</b>.</p> <p>Building on initial action in this direction, <b>bringing forward the allocation of public funding to universities on the basis of research and teaching performance</b> would have the merit of both contributing to <b>upgrading the quality of universities</b> and potentially increasing research and innovation capacity in the country, where it is still lagging behind.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Create a <b>national register of qualifications</b> to ensure <b>wide recognition of skills</b>.</li> <li>– Ensure that <b>public funding better rewards the quality of higher education and research</b>.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Latvia</b></p> <p>Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">LV - EN - FR - DE</a>  Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - LV</a>  National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- LV</a>  Stability Programme: <a href="#">LV</a></p>	<p>Despite an originally ambitious plan to reform higher education, Latvia has made no progress in setting up an internationally approved accreditation system, plans to introduce a new financing model are uncertain, consolidation of higher education institutes has been weakened and restrictions on the use of foreign languages remain unchanged.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Step up <b>implementation of the higher education reform</b>, in particular through the establishment of an <b>independent accreditation agency and a financing model that rewards quality</b>.</li> <li>– <b>Provide career guidance at all education levels, improve the quality of vocational education and training</b>, including <b>by strengthening apprenticeship</b>, and make progress in employability of young people including by putting in place outreach measures for</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lithuania</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">LT - EN - FR - DE</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - LT</a>          National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- LT</a>          Convergence Programme: <a href="#">EN- LT</a></p>	<p>This is despite the fact that there is <b>significant room for reforming the higher education system</b>, which is too large in view of the declining population, offers too many distinct study programmes and has a <b>limited attraction for foreign students and teaching staff</b>.</p> <p>The results of the first independent <b>assessment of research institutions</b> shows that only 10% of those evaluated can be considered as high-level international research centers.</p> <p>Moreover, Latvia had an <b>R&amp;D intensity of only 0.66% of GDP</b> in 2012 and is not on track to achieve its Europe 2020 objective of devoting 1.5% of GDP to R&amp;D.</p> <p>Although Latvia has taken measures to address <b>skills mismatches</b> and the <b>quality of vocational education</b>, these still require attention, notably in <b>improving the quality of apprenticeships</b> and in <b>developing comprehensive career guidance</b>. Active labour market policies are still limited in scope and over rely on public works.</p> <p>Youth unemployment and the rates of young people not in education employment or training are decreasing, but are still high. The limited coverage of active labour market policies remains a challenge, and its effectiveness and timeliness needs to be improved. <b>Skilled labour shortages</b> are forecast to become even more pronounced in the</p>	<p>non-registered youth not in employment education or training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Take steps for a <b>more integrated and comprehensive research system</b> also by <b>concentrating financing towards internationally competitive research institutions</b>.</li>   <li>– Better target active labour market policy measures to <b>the low-skilled</b> and long-term unemployed.</li> <li>– Address persistent <b>skills mismatches</b> by <b>improving the labour market relevance of education</b> and <b>promote life-long learning</b>.</li> </ul>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Luxembourg</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">FR</a> - <a href="#">EN</a> - <a href="#">DE</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN</a> - <a href="#">FR</a>          In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a>          National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- FR</a>          Annex 2 - Measures to address the 2013          CSRs: <a href="#">EN</a>          Annex 3 - Reform Commitments for          2014: <a href="#">EN</a>          Stability Programme: <a href="#">EN- FR</a></p>	<p>future.</p> <p>To improve young people's employability it is <b>important to improve the labour market relevance of vocational and higher education, improve the quality of apprenticeship schemes and work-based learning, in partnership with the private sector including SMEs.</b></p> <p><b>Increased participation in lifelong learning</b> remains insufficient.</p> <p>(..) but the employability of <b>older workers</b> should be further improved by <b>reinforcing vocational education and lifelong learning.</b></p> <p>Although various measures have been adopted, <b>youth unemployment</b> is persistently high, at 17.4% of the active population in 2013, albeit decreasing from 18% in 2012. It <b>depends heavily on educational level</b> and is <b>lower among those with a higher educational attainment.</b></p> <p><b>Luxembourg's education system faces a number of specific challenges</b>, such as <b>multilingualism</b> and the <b>specific skills</b> required by a highly specialised labour market with a big financial sector.</p> <p>The results of the OECD's 2012 students' skills survey confirmed that further measures are needed to counteract</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In order to increase employability of young people, priorities offering <b>quality apprenticeships and strengthen partnership with the private sector.</b></li>   <li>- Pursue <b>efforts to reduce youth unemployment for low-skilled</b> jobs seekers with a migrant background, through a coherent strategy, including by further improving the design and monitoring of active labour market policies, <b>addressing skills mismatches</b>, and reducing financial disincentives to work.</li>   <li>- To that effect, <b>accelerate the implementation of the reform of general and vocational education and training to better match young people's skills with labour demand.</b></li> </ul>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Malta</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">MT</a> - <a href="#">EN</a> - <a href="#">FR</a> - <a href="#">DE</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN</a> - <a href="#">MT</a>          In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a>          National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN</a>          Annex 2.1 - Measures to address the 2013          CSRs: <a href="#">EN</a>          Annex 2.2 - Quantitative assessment of the          measures: <a href="#">EN</a>          Annex 2.3 - National 2020 targets: <a href="#">EN</a>          Annex 2.4 - Reform Commitments for          2014: <a href="#">EN</a>          Stability Programme: <a href="#">EN</a></p>	<p>young people's relatively <b>weak performance in basic skills</b>, as observed since 2006. In this respect, the <b>primary and secondary school reforms should be pursued</b>.</p> <p>In addition, the <b>quality and attractiveness of vocational and educational training should be further improved</b> in order to <b>provide the labour market with a qualified workforce</b>, including in particular people with a migrant background.</p> <p>Malta's <b>early school leaving rate is still very high</b>, but measures are being taken to reduce it and a comprehensive monitoring system is being set up. <b>Basic skill attainment remains low</b>, however, thereby contributing to <b>low literacy and early school leaving</b>. Proper implementation of the recently adopted National Literacy Strategy is expected to support efforts addressing this shortcoming.</p> <p>This is to be complemented by further measures, which are expected to increase the <b>labour-market relevance of training and education</b>. These include the <b>reform of the apprenticeship framework</b>, establishing a <b>lifelong learning strategy</b>, the <b>introduction of work-based learning</b> in <b>vocational educational and training</b>, and a specific programme financed through the European Social Fund.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue policy efforts to <b>address the labour-market relevance of education and training</b> and <b>improve basic skills attainment</b> by stepping up efforts on the overdue <b>reform of the apprenticeship system</b>.</li> <li>- Further <b>reduce early school leaving</b>, notably by <b>finalising and implementing the announced national literacy strategy</b>.</li> </ul>
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## Netherlands

Commission Recommendation

[NL - EN - FR - DE](#)

[Recommendation for a Council Decision abrogating Decision 2010/287/EU on the existence of an excessive deficit in the Netherlands](#)

Commission Staff Working Paper [EN - NL](#)

In-depth review [2014](#)

National Reform Programme: [EN- NL](#)

Contribution of the Dutch Social

Partners: [EN - NL](#)

Stability Programme: [EN- NL](#)

## Poland

Commission Recommendation

[PL - EN - FR - DE](#)

[Communication from the Commission - Assessment of action taken by POLAND in response to the Council Recommendation of 10 December 2013 with a view to bringing an end to the situation of excessive government deficit](#)

Commission Staff Working Paper [EN - PL](#)

National Reform Programme: [EN- PL](#)

Convergence Programme: [PL](#)

In order to **enhance the growth potential** of the Netherlands, it is of paramount importance that the **required consolidation safeguards growth-enhancing expenditure**, such as **innovation and research, including fundamental research, education and training**.

A **low share of growth-enhancing expenditure** (education, research and innovation) hampers long-term growth prospects.

Youth **unemployment** has been gradually increasing over the last year, which partly **results from the ongoing mismatch between education outcomes and labour market needs** as well as the growing proportion of young people that are not in education, employment or training.

Despite ongoing efforts to **reform the vocational education and training system**, there is a need to **further facilitate access to good quality apprenticeships and work-based learning**, to **strengthen cooperation between schools and employers** and to reach out non-registered youth, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee.

– **Protect expenditure** in areas directly relevant for growth such as **education, innovation and research**.

– Strengthen efforts to reduce youth unemployment, notably by **further improving the relevance of education to labour market needs, increasing the availability of apprenticeships and work-based learning places** and by strengthening outreach to unregistered youth and the **cooperation between schools and employers**, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee.

– Increase **adult's participation in lifelong learning** in order to adjust skills supply to skills demand.

	<p><b>Adjustment of skills to labour market requirements</b> is also particularly important in the context of <b>lifelong learning</b>, where participation remains very low, especially with regard to <b>older workers</b>, whose competencies are often outdated.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Portugal</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">PT - EN - FR - DE</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - PT</a>          National Reform Programme: <a href="#">PT</a></p>	<p>Portugal faces challenges relating to unemployment which, notwithstanding the recent decline, remains very high, particularly for the younger cohorts. The unemployment rate stood at 17% in 2013 and youth unemployment at 37.7%, substantially above the EU average, as well as the percentage of young people not in education, employment, or training.</p> <p>As regards youth unemployment, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee, the main challenges include weak outreach to non-registered young people, and a need to <b>better align education and training with labour market needs</b>.</p> <p>Portugal has made significant <b>progress in reforming its education system</b> by means of several measures to <b>fight early school leaving, and improve tertiary attainment rate and labour market matching</b>. However, the full implementation and efficient use of <b>funding</b> remain crucial.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improve the <b>quality and labour-market relevance of the education system</b> in order to <b>reduce early school leaving and address low educational performance</b> rates.</li> <li>– Ensure <b>efficient public expenditure in education</b> and <b>reduce skills mismatches</b>, including by <b>increasing the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training</b> and <b>fostering co-operation with the business sector</b>.</li> <li>– Enhance <b>cooperation between public research and business</b> and foster knowledge transfer.</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Romania</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">RO - EN - FR - DE</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - RO</a>          National Reform Programme: <a href="#">RO</a>          Convergence Programme: <a href="#">EN- RO</a></p>	<p>In particular, further work is necessary to <b>reduce skills mismatches, including by increasing the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training, including dual vocational education and training, fostering employers' involvement in helping to design programmes and providing adequate in job trainings and apprenticeships.</b></p> <p>There is also a need to <b>effectively implement career guidance and counselling services for secondary and tertiary students in line with labour market needs and skills anticipation, and strengthen links with the business sector.</b></p> <p>Romania has a high and increasing percentage of young people not in employment, education or training (17.3% in 2013).</p> <p>The <b>Education Reform</b> of 2011, which set a long-term agenda <b>for upgrading the quality of education at all levels</b>, is not yet fully operational, due to <b>insufficient financial and human resources.</b></p> <p>Following <b>sharp decline in vocational education and training</b> in the last twenty years, several reforms and pilot projects have been initiated in recent years but the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increase the <b>quality and access to vocational education and training, apprenticeships, tertiary education and of lifelong learning and adapt them to labour market needs.</b></li> <li>– Ensure <b>better access to early childhood education</b> and care.</li> <li>– Step up efforts to implement the envisaged measures to favour the <b>integration of Roma</b> in the labour market, <b>increase school attendance and reduce early school leaving</b>, through a <b>partnership approach and a robust monitoring mechanism.</b></li> </ul>
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	<p>availability of vocational education and training, its relevance to the labour market and business involvement in work-based learning and apprenticeships remains low.</p> <p>Important <b>skills mismatches</b> persist for <b>tertiary graduates</b> and the <b>link between business and academia</b> remains weak, as shown by a high unemployment rate and many university graduates being employed either in professions not corresponding to their training or in jobs requiring lower levels of qualification.</p> <p>Participation in <b>lifelong learning</b> activities continues to be among the lowest in the EU. The <b>early school leaving rate</b> continues to be one of the highest in the EU and is now higher than prior to 2010, affecting in particular Roma.</p>	
<p><b>Slovakia</b></p> <p>Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">SK - EN - FR - DE</a>  <a href="#">Recommendation for a Council Decision abrogating Decision 2010/290/EU on the existence of an excessive deficit in Slovakia</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - SK</a>          National Reform Programme: <a href="#">SK</a>          Annex: NRP Action plan: <a href="#">SK</a>          Structural Reforms Impact Assessment: <a href="#">SK</a>          Statistical Indicators: <a href="#">SK</a>          Stability Programme: <a href="#">SK</a></p>	<p><b>Spending on education from the state budget increases in 2014 but declines in the following years.</b></p> <p>The <b>limited labour market relevance of education</b> hampers the supply of skilled labour.</p> <p>The <b>performance of pupils in compulsory education</b> is below EU average and has decreased significantly.</p> <p><b>Public expenditure on education remains low</b> despite recent <b>increases in teachers' salaries; initial training of</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– More effectively address long-term unemployment through activation measures, <b>second-chance education</b> and <b>tailored quality training</b>.</li> <li>– Take measures to <b>increase the quality of teaching in order to raise educational outcomes</b>.</li> <li>– Reinforce the <b>provision of work-based learning in companies in vocational education and training</b>.</li> <li>– <b>Adapt accreditation, funding and governance</b> measures to encourage the <b>creation of profession-oriented bachelor-level programmes</b>.</li> </ul>

**teachers** is being strengthened and practical experience reinforced, but these efforts need to continue.

Despite government efforts to reform **vocational education and training** and subsidize jobs for young people, the youth unemployment rate remains among the highest in the EU and **school-to-job transition** remains cumbersome.

The relatively low percentage of **job-oriented bachelor-level programmes** and insufficient **cooperation with employers** reduces the labour market relevance of **tertiary education**.

Improving the quality of **higher education** and of **cooperation between businesses and education institutions** would also help to enhance the innovation capacity of the Slovak economy. The plans in the Smart Specialisation Strategy go in the right direction, but need to be effectively implemented.

The persistently low provision of good quality **early childhood education** and care weighs on **educational achievements**, in particular for Roma. So far, initiatives aimed at improving **educational outcomes for Roma pupils** are overly reliant on EU co-financed projects.

- Improve the **quality and relevance of the science base** and implement plans to **foster** effective knowledge transfer and **co-operation between academia, research and business**.
- Adopt systemic measures to improve **access to high quality and inclusive pre-school and school education for marginalised communities**, including Roma and take steps to increase their wider **participation in vocational training and higher education**.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Slovenia</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">SL - EN - FR - DE</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - SL</a>          In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a>          National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- SL</a>          Stability Programme: <a href="#">EN- SL</a></p>	<p>The situation on the labour market has worsened. Unemployment reached 10.3% in 2013 and youth unemployment climbed to 21.6% in 2013 while the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training increased by 2.1 pps between 2011 and 2013.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Address <b>skills mismatches</b> by <b>improving the attractiveness of vocational education and training</b> and by further <b>developing cooperation with the relevant stakeholders in assessing labour market needs</b>.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Spain</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">ES - EN - FR - DE</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - ES</a>          In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a>          National Reform Programme: <a href="#">ES</a>          Stability Programme: <a href="#">EN- ES</a></p>	<p>The <b>inadequate labour-market relevance of education and training and the high proportion of unemployed without formal qualifications</b> (35.2%) contribute to the high youth unemployment rate, as well as to long term unemployment. The rate of young people not in employment, education or training remains higher than the EU average and has been increasing sharply. <b>The proportion of pupils and students leaving education and training early</b>, although decreasing, also remains <b>very high</b> (23.5%).</p> <p><b>Tertiary attainment</b> rates are sustained, but <b>vocational education and training and apprenticeship schemes are still under-used</b> and the <b>proficiency of upper secondary vocational education and training graduates lags behind</b> the EU average.</p> <p>Spain is also working on measures to encourage youth employment. The national 2013-2016 Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Strategy, presented in March 2013 is now being implemented, although some measures have</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reinforce the <b>coordination between labour market and education and training policies</b>.</li> <li>– Implement the 2013-2016 Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Strategy and evaluate its effectiveness. <b>Provide good quality offers of employment opportunities, apprenticeships and traineeships for young people</b> and improve the outreach to nonregistered unemployed young people, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee.</li> <li>– Effectively implement the <b>new educational schemes to increase the quality of primary and secondary education</b>.</li> <li>– Enhance guidance and support for groups at risk of <b>early school leaving</b>.</li> <li>– Increase the labour-market relevance of <b>vocational education and training and of higher education, in particular by enhancing the cooperation with employers and supporting the training of trainers and tutors</b>.</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sweden</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commission Recommendation  <a href="#">SV - EN - FR - DE</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN - SV</a>          In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a>          National Reform programme: <a href="#">EN- SV</a>          External contributions to the National          Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN- SV</a>          Annex 1 - CSR Reporting and macro-          structural reforms: <a href="#">EN -SV</a>          Annex 2 - Measures with a bearing on          national Europe 2020 targets:  <a href="#">EN - SV</a>          Annex 3 - Main reforms for the coming 12</p>	<p>yet to be put in place.</p> <p>Building on the Strategy, Spain has undertaken steps to fight youth unemployment, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee. Some progress has been registered in measures to fight early school leaving and to <b>promote dual vocational education and training, but full implementation and efficient use of funding remain crucial.</b> On <b>dual vocational training, continued coordination among all stakeholders, including decision makers and training providers at all government levels and employers, is needed to streamline the system, favour a better match of training to labour demands</b> and guarantee the compatibility of dual vocational education and training models across regions.</p> <p>The labour market situation of the young, the low-skilled and people with a migrant background remains weak. Youth unemployment remains above the EU average.</p> <p>While the Swedish government has taken steps to address these points, it appears that <b>difficulties may be linked to problems in the education field, with the Swedish education system failing to supply a proportion of young people with the necessary skills for successful integration into the labour market.</b></p> <p>As regards <b>labour market integration and education and</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Take appropriate measures to <b>improve basic skills and facilitate the transition from education to the labour market</b>, including through a <b>wider use of work-based training and apprenticeships.</b></li> <li>– Reinforce <b>efforts to target labour market and education measures more effectively towards low-educated</b> young people and people with a migrant background.</li> </ul>
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<p>months: <a href="#">EN</a> -<a href="#">SV</a>          Convergence Programme: <a href="#">EN</a>- <a href="#">SV</a></p>	<p><b>training</b>, Sweden has adopted measures to facilitate the <b>transition from school to work (apprenticeships reform</b>, including an 'apprentice salary') and <b>help young people get work experience ('vocational introduction employment')</b>. The transition has been <i>de facto</i> strengthened through the introduction of <b>early measures for those most in need</b>. However, coverage and outreach to unregistered people who are not in education, employment or training remains weak.</p>	
<p><b><u>United Kingdom</u></b>          Commission Recommendation <a href="#">EN</a> - <a href="#">FR</a> - <a href="#">DE</a>          Commission Staff Working Paper <a href="#">EN</a>          In-depth review <a href="#">2014</a>          National Reform Programme: <a href="#">EN</a>          Convergence Programme: <a href="#">EN</a></p>	<p>The United Kingdom continues to address the challenges of unemployment and underemployment as well as the specific issues related to youth unemployment.</p> <p>There are important challenges with <b>equipping young people with the skills and work experience required by the labour market and increasing the supply of apprenticeships</b>. This helps to explain the fact that the take-up of wage subsidies provided for by the Youth Contract remains lower than forecast.</p> <p>The <b>labour market suffers from skill mismatches</b> and the authorities are attempting to <b>re-skill the workforce</b> to address both unemployment and a <b>shortage of high-quality vocational and technical skills</b>.</p> <p>While there have been efforts to <b>improve the quality of apprenticeship programmes</b>, further efforts are needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Address structural bottlenecks related to infrastructure, <b>skills mismatches</b> (...)</li> <li>– Maintain commitment to the Youth Contract, especially by <b>improving skills that meet employer needs</b>. Ensure employer engagement by placing emphasis on addressing skills mismatches through <b>more advanced and higher level skills provision and furthering apprenticeship offers</b>.</li> <li>– <b>Reduce the number of young people with low basic skills</b>.</li> </ul>



Moreover, the **qualifications system** remains complex and needs to be streamlined to facilitate universal recognition and a higher level of **engagement by employers**.