

EAEA INFONOTE: THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER

Due to the recent economic crisis, the European institutions saw a greater need for stronger economic governance and more policy coordination between the member states. As a result, the [European Semester](#), a cycle of economic policy coordination within the EU, was created. EAEA Infonote presents the elements of this new policy instrument from an adult education advocacy point of view.

What is the European Semester?

The European Semester is the first phase of the EU's annual cycle of economic policy guidance and surveillance. Each European Semester, the European Commission analyses the budget and structural reform policies of every Member State, provides recommendations, and monitors their performance. In the second phase of the annual cycle, known as the National Semester, Member States fulfil the policies they have agreed.

The aim is to make the European institutions supervise the national economic and fiscal policies before their adoption but also to make EU countries cooperate more in those areas. All the recommendations are based on the countries economical situation analyses and are aligned with the Stability and Growth Pact and [EU2020 Strategy](#).

How does it work?

The Semester contains a clear timetable, according to which the member states receive EU-level advice and then submit their policy plans to be assessed at the EU level. After their evaluation, the member states are given individual recommendations for their national budgetary and reform policies. The objective is that member states take into account the recommendations when they define their next year's budget.



The cycle starts again towards the end of the year, when the Commission gives an overview of the economic situation in its Annual Growth Survey for the coming year.



Education policy and the European Semester

The Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council (EYCS) supported the European Semester in a [meeting](#) on February 2014 stating that education and training have a strategic role to play in supporting the economic recovery in Europe.

The EYCS Council should address and follow up the education and training targets of Europe 2020 during both the European and National Semester via Annual Growth Survey and National Reform Programmes. [The Education and Training Forum](#), organised by the European Commission with the support of EUCIS-LLL platform, could sort out the next challenges in September/October to add in the recommendations by March. This way the link between the European Semester and ET2020 can be tightened and stakeholders' participation increased.

Country reports and Education and Training Monitor

For education and training, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) analyses the developments in the member states, based on the country reports they receive.

[The annual Education and Training Monitor](#) sets out the progress on the [ET2020](#) benchmarks and core indicators, including the [Europe2020 headline target](#) on education and training. It is accompanied by 28 individual country reports and an [online visualisation tool](#).

The Education and Training Monitor illustrates the evolution of education and training systems across Europe, with a particular focus on the country-specific recommendations adopted in the field of education and training, and contributes to the analytical basis for the next European Semester. As the reports are written and provided by member states, i.e. the relevant ministries, the European Commission is keen to receive more information from other stakeholders such as civil society.

[Here](#) you can find the chapter on adult education of the most recent Monitor (2013).

Country-specific recommendations

The main outcome of the European Semester is the so-called country-specific recommendations (CSRs). Education and training are part of the recommendations, and in 2013, the following countries received a recommendation on the issue of lifelong learning: Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Spain.

You can find the recommendations on [here](#).

From October 2013 the Commission has introduced an interesting annex to the Annual Growth Survey. The Joint Employment Report assesses the social and employment situation in the EU by analysing indicators such as unemployment level; the NEET¹ rate; the real gross disposable income of households; the at-risk-of-poverty rate of the working age population, etc. Even if this document is nonbinding, it can be a useful tool for civil society to challenge national policy-makers when advocating for adult education.

¹ Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Civil society organisations' role in the European Semester

The European Commission and the European Council have expressed support for involving different stakeholders and their expertise in the European Semester. [European Economic and Social Committee](#) has stressed that organised civil society should be involved in monitoring and implementation of the EU2020 as active partners also by the member states.

At the national level, civil society organisations should take up the main points raised by the EYCS Council and monitor the Programmes produced by member states to ensure that those priorities have been taken into account. If not, they should push for the Commission to propose relevant policy guidance to be finalised by the Council, and keep on monitoring the national follow-up in autumn. At the European level, civil society organisations should actively advocate the inclusion of civil society in the European Semester and EU2020 implementation.

What can you do?

Every member state agrees to implement the CSRs, so any recommendation that tackles adult education might have an impact on the adult education community. We therefore recommend:

- Check your own [country reports](#).
- Check if your country received [CRSs](#) concerning adult learning
- If you disagree with either the report or the CSRs, please talk to your ministries (and let EAEA know!)
- Fill in [EAEA's country report survey](#) to present your own feedback!

Sources

[European Commission: The European Semester](#)

[Council of the European Union: European Semester](#)

[EUCIS-LLL - European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning](#)