



Directorate-General for

STRUCTURAL REFORM SUPPORT

**Labour market, education,
health and social services**



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INTRODUCING THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR **STRUCTURAL REFORM SUPPORT**

The Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) helps EU Member States carry out reforms to stimulate job creation and sustainable growth. EU Member States can ask DG REFORM for support, which is then delivered in the form of tailor-made expertise.

Today, DG REFORM is engaged in **over 1 500 reform projects in all 27 EU Member States**.

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

Since 2017, DG REFORM has been managing a dedicated programme – the Structural Reform Support Programme – with a budget of **EUR 222.8 million** for 2017 to 2020.

The current Technical Support Instrument programme is the main source of funding for **technical support projects** in EU Member States and does not require co-financing.

Member States can request help from the programme to implement the following:

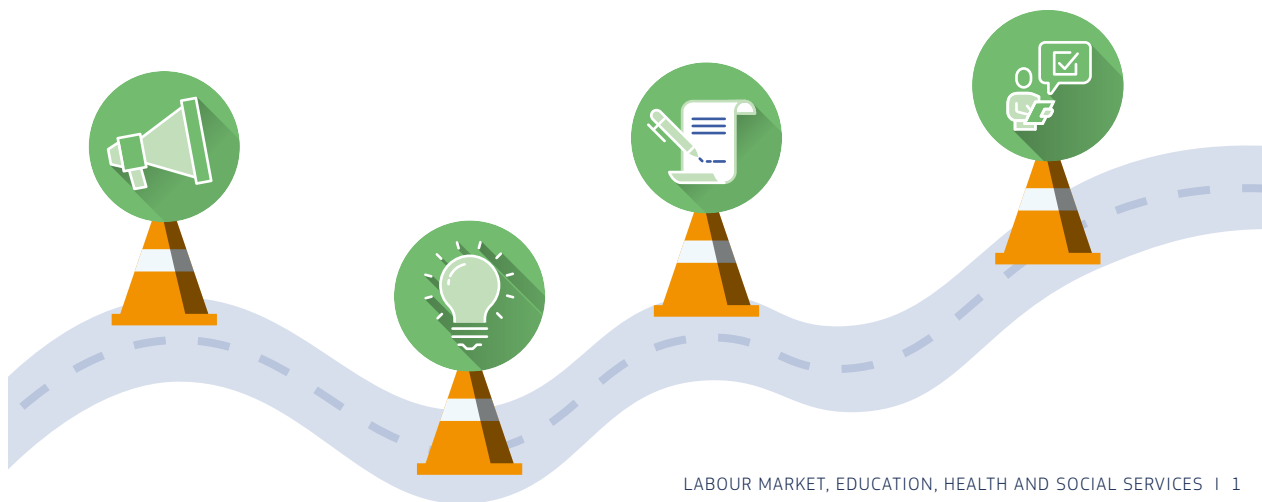
- **reforms identified by the European Commission**, for example in its annual economic policy recommendations (the ‘European Semester’ process);
- measures they have to take to **implement EU priorities and EU law**;
- reforms undertaken on their **own initiative**.

HOW IT WORKS

DG REFORM provides Member States with expertise, which can take the form of:

- expert and fact-finding missions on the ground to assess the situation;
- diagnostic analyses and recommendations on ways to address the situation;
- sharing relevant best practices through seminars, conferences and workshops;
- developing and implementing targeted solutions to address the situation.

To deliver this support, DG REFORM uses a **wide range of experts** from national administrations (including through the TAIEX-SRSP Peer 2 Peer instrument), international organisations, private firms and consultancies, or expertise directly from the European Commission.



LABOUR MARKET, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

DG REFORM provides support for a wide range of topics, focusing on the priorities identified by EU Member States in the areas of the labour market, education, health and social services and migration. Technical support in these areas aims at:

- fostering access to effective and accessible **health services** including health promotion and disease prevention measures;
- supporting reforms in **skills, education and training** (including vocational education and training, adult learning and research);
- strengthening the functioning of **labour markets**, including through improved administrative capacity;
- adapting **social protection systems**;
- supporting the **fight against poverty** and the promotion of **social inclusion**;
- improving **asylum, migration** and **border policies**.

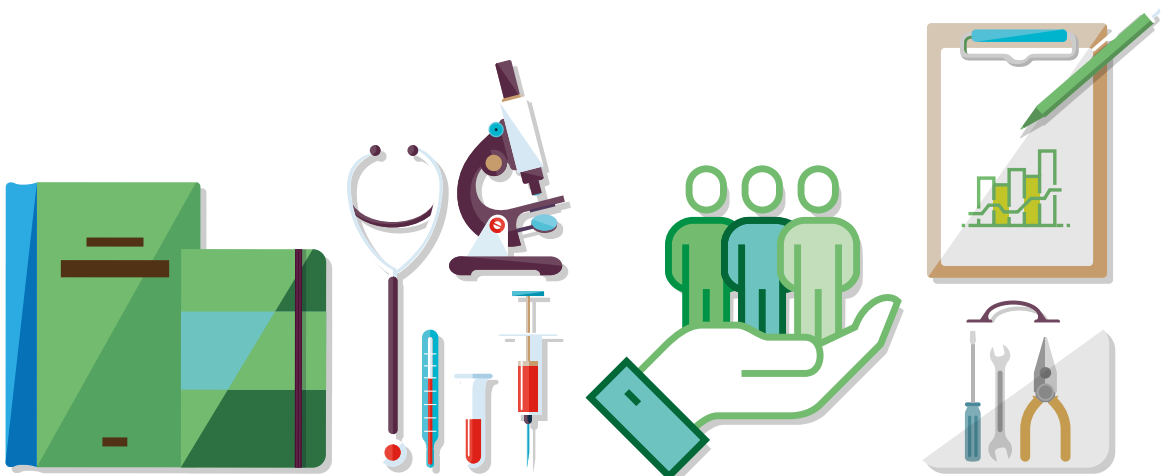


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HEALTH SYSTEMS

Ageing populations, rising expectations for high quality services and technological progress are challenging the sustainability of **health systems**. These factors suggest that structural adjustments and/or reforms are necessary to enhance public health policies and the efficiency and sustainability of health systems, while guaranteeing equitable access to quality services.

EU Member States are engaging in reforms to address these challenges and to enshrine them in their national health programmes, policies and strategies. DG REFORM offers support to build national institutions' capacity to implement reforms and exchange good practices with other EU Member States, thus complementing other available support.



HEALTH SYSTEM REFORMS IN SLOVENIA

DG REFORM has been supporting **Slovenia** in four strategic reform areas, namely:

- governance of the healthcare system;
- long-term care;
- quality of care and patient safety;
- financing of hospital services.

The collaboration between Slovenia and the European Commission on key reform areas has facilitated the preparation and adoption of laws and regulations and the deployment of tools to contribute to the quality, accessibility and long-term fiscal sustainability of the health and long-term care systems.



EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT AREAS

- **Access to care** and **quality of care**
- **Digital health**
- **Effectiveness, efficiency** and **resilience** of health systems
- **Financing** and **reimbursement mechanisms**
- **Governance** and **monitoring mechanisms**
- **Health workforce**
- **Integration of care**
- **Long-term care**
- **Mental health**
- **Public health**

The support measures have helped the authorities to:

- establish a comprehensive set of tools and mechanisms to improve the governance of the health system (i.e. a health system performance assessment and a health workforce planning);
- strengthen the implementation of a pilot in long-term care schemes that will facilitate the roll-out of the long-term care system at national level;
- establish a national patient safety system and enhance the quality of care;
- modernise the hospital financing system.

These reforms are key to ensuring that adequate healthcare and long-term care is provided to the population.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Skills are a crucial driver of the EU's competitiveness and innovation capacity and a key determinant of social cohesion and personal well-being. Ongoing technological transformations and fast economic restructuring require people to engage in continuous learning throughout their lifetime. Member States are thus engaging in reforms to improve the capacity of their **education and training systems** to deliver high quality education and ensure their citizens have constant and equal access to it. DG REFORM supports them by providing expertise and exchange of relevant practices, thus complementing other available support.

CURRICULUM REFORM AND UPGRADE OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

DG REFORM has provided technical support to **Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania** and **Slovakia** to upgrade their teacher policies and support the implementation of curriculum reforms. In these Member States, international expertise and exchange of practices have contributed to design:

- competence frameworks for teachers and school leaders;
- tools to assess the effectiveness of professional development;
- student assessment systems based on learning outcomes;
- systems of initial teacher education and continuous professional development;



EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT AREAS

- Addressing **low education outcomes** and **early school dropouts**
- **Adult education**
- **Digital education** and skills
- **Curriculum reform** (including student assessment)
- **Early childhood education** and care
- **Efficiency of funding** and **spending systems**
- **Higher education**, research and **innovation**
- **Inclusive education**
- **Monitoring of education systems** and **policy-making**
- **Teachers** and **school leadership** policy
- **Vocational education and training**



- teacher workforce forecasting models;
- policies to increase the attractiveness of teaching profession.

The technical support is expected to contribute to increasing the quality of education and thus improving the capacity to provide young people with the relevant skills and qualifications.

IMPROVING THE RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF ADULT EDUCATION

DG REFORM has provided technical support to **Belgium, Spain, Hungary, the Netherlands** and **Portugal** to upgrade their adult education systems. In these Member States, international expertise and exchange of practices have contributed to designing:

- quality assurance systems for adult education provision;
- models for the recognition, validation and accreditation of skills;
- national strategies and measures to improve basic skills;
- monitoring systems and skill forecasting systems;
- governance models for adult training provision.

The technical support is expected to contribute to increasing the integration of low-skilled adults in relevant education programmes, and to improving the quality and recognition of adult learning programmes to eventually increase adults' skills levels.



SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Ageing populations as well as the transformation of labour markets and economies pose challenges to the public provision of social benefits and services. DG REFORM supports Member States with the adaptation of their **social protection systems** in various ways and during all phases of the reform process. The support provided ranges from measures to strengthen administrative capacity to the review of benefit schemes, and an improved and better coordinated delivery of social services.

STRENGTHENING SUPPLEMENTARY PENSION SAVINGS

DG REFORM has provided technical support to **Ireland, Croatia, Lithuania and Slovenia** in the field of supplementary pension savings. In these Member States, international expertise and the exchange of good practices have contributed to:

- reforming the institutional, regulatory, investment and supervisory framework;
- reviewing pension products and fiscal incentives;
- designing effective pension information and communication with citizens;
- dialogue between the different public and private stakeholders involved, in order to help advance the national reform debate.



EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT AREAS

- Developing **inclusion and integration policies**
- Improving the **analytical capacity of social security administrations**
- Improving the delivery **of social services**
- Improving the **targeting and adequacy of social benefits**
- **Modernising the administration** of social benefits and services
- Reviewing **disability policy and assessment systems**
- Strengthening the **effectiveness of supplementary pension savings**



The technical support in this area is expected to contribute to better performing funded pension systems, and thus more adequate incomes in old age for future generations of pensioners.

REFORMING THE ASSESSMENT OF DISABILITY

DG REFORM has supported **Belgium, Greece, Latvia** and **Lithuania** in improving disability assessment methodologies and procedures to contribute to a more holistic assessment of disability that takes better account of functional capacity and individual circumstances. Areas of technical support include:

- analysing existing benefits and services aimed at providing income and integration support to people with disabilities;
- reviewing organisational and administrative processes;
- reviewing assessment methodologies;
- adapting assessment tools to the national context;
- designing, implementing and evaluating a pilot programme;
- designing and providing training sessions;
- developing recommendations for revised assessment processes.



The supported reforms of the disability assessment system are expected to contribute to fair and transparent procedures, as well as a reduction in administrative burden and waiting times to support the (re-)integration of people with disabilities in society and the labour market.



LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Member States face the common challenge of the ongoing structural transformation of **labour markets**. DG REFORM complements available funding tools at EU level by offering Member States concrete technical support with the design, planning and implementation of labour market reforms. Technical support projects can address both the revision of key labour market policies and the strengthening of the administrative capacity of the labour administration.



EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT AREAS

- Developing **innovation and employment policies**
- Fighting **undeclared work**
- Fostering the **use of administrative data** for policymaking
- **Modernising the administration** of labour market policies and programmes
- Strengthening the effectiveness of **active labour market policies**

IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

DG REFORM provides technical support to **Estonia, Greece, Spain, Italy** and **Slovenia** to strengthen the capacity of public employment services and reform the delivery of active labour market policies. To this end, international expertise is mobilised to:

- map the status quo and consult stakeholders to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current framework;
- review the administrative processes, legislative frameworks and cooperation formats in these often decentralised systems;
- design robust monitoring and evaluation systems, with a stronger focus on defining, measuring and rewarding performance;
- strengthen the design and implementation of effective active labour market policies, referral mechanisms and employability programmes, including through the development of new models of service delivery.

Ultimately, technical support in this area aims at enhancing the impact of employment services and improving the effectiveness of active labour market policies.



TACKLING UNDECLARED WORK AND LABOUR EXPLOITATION

DG REFORM has provided technical support to **Greece** and **Italy** to fight labour exploitation and undeclared work. International expertise and the exchange of good practices have contributed to:

- drafting a national road map and action plan to fight undeclared work (Greece) or labour exploitation (Italy);
- establishing a regular dialogue between the tripartite constituents as well as national and regional stakeholders;
- reforming the institutional framework and designing a strong monitoring and evaluation system;
- designing, piloting and implementing new inspection approaches;
- quantitative and qualitative analysis to inform policy reforms.

The technical support to strengthen institutional capacity and review policies in the field of labour exploitation and undeclared work is expected to contribute to the creation of decent work and, ultimately, the reduction of inequalities and poverty.



MIGRATION

Many Member States are facing demographic pressure due to ageing and emigration, resulting in labour and skills shortages. Reforming **labour migration policies**, tackling the **brain-drain challenge** and improving **integration** measures for migrants and refugees are increasingly relevant. DG REFORM helps Member States to design, evaluate and implement reforms based on solid evidence and to communicate on them effectively. Tailor-made support is offered in coordination with actors at local level where needed, bringing in ideas that have been tested elsewhere.



EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT AREAS

- **Asylum**
- **Data and information management** in the field of asylum, migration, integration and border management
- **Integration of migrants and refugees**
- **Labour migration and intra-EU mobility**

DESIGN MIGRATION POLICIES TO ADDRESS LABOUR AND SKILLS SHORTAGES

DG REFORM has provided technical support to **Lithuania, Poland** and **Slovakia** to address challenges related to the shortage of an adequately skilled workforce and the ability to attract international talent. To this end, international expertise has been mobilised to:

- present good practices of talent attraction and retention policies developed in other countries;
- recommend options for attracting and retaining foreign workers and encouraging the return of nationals established abroad taking the national context into account;



- build capacity, for instance through training on bilateral cooperation on labour migration.

The technical support in this area is expected to contribute to more efficient labour mobility schemes, with a view to addressing shortages of adequately skilled workers and thus strengthening competitiveness.

STRENGTHEN CAPACITY TO BETTER INTEGRATE MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

DG REFORM has supported **Italy, Austria** and **Portugal** in strengthening the institutional and operational capacity to provide integration services to migrants and refugees. Specifically, the following activities have been implemented:

- Review of the services provided by the National Centres for Migrant Integration in Portugal to improve service provision;



- Support the design and implementation of key measures of the Italian national integration plan for refugees;
- Strengthen coordination and the sharing of practices among the actors involved in youth work and integration in Austria.

This technical support is expected to strengthen integration systems for migrants and refugees at national and local levels, with a view to supporting their integration in labour markets and society.

CONTACT DETAILS



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Main contact point for applying for the Technical Support Instrument

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Find out more

- DG REFORM:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/structural-reform-support_en
- Structural Reform Support Programme:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/overview-funding-programmes/structural-reform-support-programme-srsp_en