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STUDY

Country Specific Recommendations for 2016 and 2017

A comparison and an overview of implementation

This document presents:

- The **Country Specific Recommendations for 2016** generally endorsed by the European Council on 28/29 June 2016 and adopted by the Council on 12 July 2016;
- **The assessment of the implementation of 2016 Country Specific Recommendations** based on the Commission (1) **Country Reports** published on 22 February 2017 and (2) **Assessment of the 2017 Stability and Convergence Programmes** published on 23 May 2017;
- The **Country Specific Recommendations for 2017** generally endorsed by the European Council on 22/23 June 2017 and adopted by the Council on 11 July 2017; and
- The **Council Recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area** approved by the Council on 21 March 2017.

The above policy recommendations may relate to **a specific EU policy objective and underlying legal procedure**:

- The first CSR generally refers to **fiscal policies.** It could therefore trigger further procedural steps either under the preventive arm or the corrective arm of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) (in accordance with Regulation 1466/97, Regulation 1467/97, and Regulation 1173/2011).
- If the Member State is **experiencing macro-economic imbalances**, then one or more CSRs may refer to these imbalances and could therefore trigger further procedural steps under the Macro-Economic Imbalances Procedure (MIP) (in accordance with Regulation 1176/2011 and Regulation 1174/2011).
- Other CSRs may address **other major economic policy objectives**, such as growth enhancing structural reforms, employment and social aspects and/or financial market stability (in accordance with the integrated guidelines adopted under Articles 121(2), 136 and 148(4) of the TFEU).

► The 2017 CSRs have been re-arranged in the table below, where applicable, by policy area to allow for an easier comparison with the 2016 CSRs.
► The "colour code" used for the assessment of CSR implementation is based on the categories used by the Commission (COM) in its February 2017 Country Reports: **"red"** = "no progress" or "limited progress"; **"yellow"** = "some progress"; **"green"** = "substantial progress" or "full progress" (see assessment criteria). Where relevant, the COM assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact published in May 2017 is included in **"grey"** (as it does not explicitly refers the above-mentioned assessment grid).

Click to Scroll-down: BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE, UK, Euro Area

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BE	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. Achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of at least 0,6 % of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and in 2017. Use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. Agree on an enforceable distribution of fiscal targets among all government levels. **Simplify the tax system and remove distortive tax expenditures.**	**Limited progress** (this overall assessment of country-specific recommendation 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): **Limited progress** has been made towards an enforceable distribution of fiscal targets among the various levels of government. The lack of any formal commitment by the regions and communities to disaggregated fiscal trajectories at their own level undermines the credibility of Belgium's overall trajectory and hampers debt reduction efforts. **Some progress** has been made in reforming the tax system: • The federal government has announced its intention to reform corporate taxation in the direction of reducing the nominal statutory rate. A report of the High Council for Finance was published in July 2016 analysing options. As yet, no firm plans have been brought forward. • Measures included in the draft budgetary plan: – a further increase of the withholding tax rate, from 27 % to 30 %; – an increase (ceiling is doubled) and broadening (foreign platforms also taxed) of the stock-exchange tax; – the abolition of the 'speculation tax'; – the introduction of a mobility budget for employees as an alternative to a company car and of a fixed levy imposed on employers for company fuel cards. • Other measures legislated or announced since July 2016:	**1. Pursue a substantial fiscal effort in 2018 in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact**, taking into account the need to strengthen the ongoing recovery and to ensure the sustainability of Belgium's public finances. Use windfall gains, such as proceeds from asset sales, to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. Agree on an enforceable distribution of fiscal targets among government levels and ensure independent fiscal monitoring. **Remove distortive tax expenditures. Improve the composition of public spending** in order to create room for infrastructure investment, including on transport infrastructure.

		– Abolition of existing patent income deduction regime (1 July 2016); approval by Council of Ministers of draft bill on Innovation Income Deduction regime (2 December 2016); – Legislation for the specific fiscal treatment of income received by private individuals providing services through the sharing economy under certain circumstances (1 July); – Online betting and gambling activities no longer exempt from VAT (1 August); – New single annual bank tax replaces four existing taxes (act passed on 3 August). In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Belgium (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"..the debt criterion as defined in the Treaty and in Regulation (EC) No 1467/1997 should be considered as currently complied with. At the same time, additional fiscal measures are to be taken in 2017 to ensure broad compliance with the adjustment path towards the MTO in 2016 and 2017 together. In 2017 and 2018, Belgium is forecast not to comply with the debt reduction benchmark at unchanged policy.* *In 2016, primary government expenditure exceeded the applicable expenditure benchmark rate by 0.6% of GDP. The structural balance improved by 0.1% of GDP, which is below the required adjustment towards the MTO.* ***Following an overall assessment, this points to some deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO in 2016****.* *The planned progress towards the MTO appears appropriate when taken at face value. However,* ***according to the Commission 2017 spring forecast, there is a risk of significant deviation from the adjustment path towards the MTO in 2017,*** *on the basis of the average deviation in 2016-2017, and in 2018 at unchanged policy."* (p. 20)	

	2. Carry out the intended review of the Law of 1996 on the promotion of employment and the safeguarding of competitiveness in consultation with the social partners. Ensure that wages can evolve in line with productivity. Ensure the effectiveness of labour market activation policies. **Move forward with education and vocational training reforms and provide training support for disadvantaged groups**, in particular people from a migrant background.	**Substantial progress:** **<u>Substantial progress</u>** has been made in making wage formation more responsive to the business cycle and changes in productivity. The law on the revision of the 1996 Law on employment and competitiveness is to be voted by parliament in February 2017. It has already been taken into account in the Inter Professional Agreement agreed between the Social Partners on 31/01/2017. **<u>Some progress</u>** has been made on ensuring the effectiveness of labour market activation policies. • Taxes on labour are being progressively decreased and eligibility conditions for pre-retirement and retirement are progressively being tightened. These ongoing reforms are producing positive effects on take home pay for low and average wage earners as well as on the participation rate of the older workers. • The law on flexible and workable work includes a number of measures to increase the flexibility of working time arrangements and to promote in-company training. It also reintroduces the possibility of a lower minimum wage for young people. • The three regions and the German-speaking Community have started to reform the recently devolved competences in the area of activation. The existing employment incentive schemes are being rationalised to focus financial support on a limited number of priority groups and to better integrate employment support with other types of activation measures. The reformed employment support systems are already operational in Flanders as of January 2017 and will become fully operational in Wallonia and Brussels in the course of 2017. • In November 2016 the "Individualised Project for Social Integration" of the Federal government became compulsory for all new living wage beneficiaries. • At the end of 2016 the federal government introduced a number of measures to make resuming	**2. Ensure that the most disadvantaged groups,** including people with a migrant background, **have equal opportunities** to participate in quality education, vocational training, and the labour market.

		work after work incapacity financially more attractive. **<u>Some progress</u>** has been made on educational and vocational reforms. • In May 2016, the Flemish Community launched two concept notes 'Modernising secondary education, measures for primary education and the first stage' and 'The second and third stage of secondary education'. This started the rollout of the final measures of the master plan secondary education. • After a consultation, the Flemish government adopted in January 2017 the final measures of the Flemish modernisation of secondary education. Key measures plan for a new ordering of the study offer and the rationalisation from 29 to 8 study areas. In 2017 a first draft a new parliamentary act for the modernisation of secondary education will be presented to the government. The legislative framework will be elaborated with the aim of reaching a progressive implementation school year by school year from 1st of September 2018 onwards (starting with the first grade of the first stage). • On learning outcomes, the 2016 societal debate on the attainment targets resulted in final reports which have been handed over to the Flemish Parliament. In the phased rollout of the renewed attainment targets, the update and development of attainment targets for a selection of sets of targets for primary education and the first stage of secondary education will start in 2017. • The French Community has launched a process to reform its compulsory education system over the period 2015-2030 (Pacte pour un Enseignement d'Excellence). Based on the main orientations approved by the government mid-2016 and on an impact assessment, the December 2016 draft advice of the steering group sets the proposed five strategic axes, objectives and priorities. Great attention is given to early childhood education. Initial	

		Vocational Education and Training (IVET) would be reduced to one track with fewer study options and apprenticeships integrated into the education system. After a two months consultation period, the advice is expected to be finalised in view of its adoption by the government, early 2017. The implementation period has been extended from 2025 till 2030; • Independently of the "Pacte", first measures have been approved namely with the so-called "Décret fourre-tout" adopted in 2016. Mandatory support to starting teachers has been introduced in September 2016. Each school will also be required to establish by 2018/2019 a 6-year pilot plan with objectives in more than 10 key areas. The heads of underperforming schools have to draw up a remedial action plan with the support of their umbrella organisation; • Both communities are pursuing the preparation of their reform of initial teacher education launched under the previous governments. On teachers' careers, the Flemish education minister and social partners are still pursuing their negotiations on a 'career pact' (Loopbaanpact). The reform of teacher's careers is part of the school reform of the French Community.	
	3. Boost the capacity to innovate, in particular by fostering investment in knowledge-based capital. **Increase competition in the business services sector and the retail sector** by removing unwarranted operational and establishment restrictions. **Address shortfalls in investment** in transport infrastructure and energy generation capacity.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** has been made to boost the capacity to innovate: • Major multi-annual plans for R&I include successive versions of the 'Marshall plan' complemented by 'Creative Wallonia' and 'Digital Wallonia' in Wallonia; regional innovation plan in Brussels; and 'VISIE 2050: a long-term strategy for Flanders' in Flanders. These main regional strategies reflect a broad political commitment to boost productivity and address societal challenges through research and innovation.	**3. Foster investment in knowledge-based capital**, in particular with measures to increase digital technologies adoption, and innovation diffusion. **Increase competition in professional services markets and retail,** and **enhance market mechanisms in network industries.**

		• In July 2016, the Brussels region updated its innovation strategy plan for the period 2016-2020. • In July 2016, the federal government introduced a fiscal regime for workers of the “Collaborative economy”. This was introduced under the “Digital Belgium” initiative, which aims to stimulate entrepreneurship and new economic activities, while providing a clear legal framework. The regime foresees an effective 10% tax rate under 5.000 EUR gross income for individuals providing services via a recognized collaborative platform (Loi-Programme/Programmawet 01/07/2016 and two Royal Decrees 24/01/2017). • The Belgian ‘Patent Box’ regime has effectively been abolished on 1 July 2016. It will be accompanied by a transitory regime of five years. The federal government is working on a new regime entitled ‘deduction for innovation income’ to bring it in line with the ‘modified nexus approach’ as introduced by the OECD (BEPS/action 5). The draft law has been submitted to the State Council for its opinion. Adoption is expected early 2017. • Flanders and the French Community agreed on the future of the Interuniversity attraction poles whose current financing commitment ends in September 2017 (managed at Federal level before the 6th State Reform). A new programme will start in 2018, co-managed by FWO and CNRS with a dedicated budget of 17.7 million (Flanders) and 13.9 million (French Community) starting in 2018. • The Brussels *Small Business Act* is a plan/vision structured around 77 measures within five development pillars to be implemented between 2016 and 2025. It covers enabling an environment for creation, regardless of the life stage of the company or its model; improving access to finance, using a credit intermediary (development of a regional strategy for microcredit, increase the microfinance capacity); supporting the diversity of entrepreneurs and businesses through segmented	

		measures; improving the relations between SMEs and the Brussels capital region by making the administration more "business friendly"; supporting companies in their development (innovation, internationalization, digitization, circular economy). Most of the implementation should start in 2017. • In October 2016 the Flemish region adopted a new action plan for innovation procurement. The new action plan is based on a combination of pre-commercial procurement (PCP) and public procurement of innovative solutions (PPI). It foresees co-financing for Flemish procurers to kick-start 5 new PCP and 10 PPI lighthouse projects in 2017. • As announced in its 2017 budget, Flanders will structurally increase its public R&D budget, mostly to the benefit of Public Research Organisations, in line with its commitment that public R&D intensity should reach 1% in Flanders (currently 0.78%). **Limited progress** has been made on increasing competition in the business and professional services: • End of 2016, a proposal for on the transposition of the Directive 2013/55/EU was voted in the Belgian parliament. For intra-Belgian consistency reasons, a cooperation agreement will be drafted. For Flanders, an implementation law has been submitted to the Flemish parliament. According to the Walloon representative, an orientation note is submitted to the Walloon government, presenting the screening of existing legislation in the area of regulated professions. In the Brussels region, the regional government needs to decide on the proposal for the implementation law. **Limited progress** has been made on removing unwarranted operational and establishment restrictions in the retail sectors: • Further to the 6th State reform transferring competences on retail establishment, the three	

		regions have adopted acts regulating this field (Flanders, as the last region, adopted the relevant act in July 2016, however the provisions relating to authorisations for retail outlets will not enter into force before 2018). The new regional laws provide for some simplification of administrative procedures, but the substantive conditions for granting authorisations leave a broad margin for interpretation. The concrete implementation of these rules will be important to ensure that these do not lead to market entry barriers. • As regards e-commerce, the Royal Decree from March 2016 has made night work related to on-line sales in the retail sector possible. **<u>Some progress</u>** has been made on addressing shortfalls in investment: • In September 2016, the federal government proposed to implement a National Pact for Strategic Investments, calling upon private and public investors to work together in order to boost investment in a number of key strategic sectors, namely energy, security, transport and the digital economy. The roll-out of the plan is foreseen over the period 2017-2030. The governance and policy choices will be determined in more detail in cooperation with the concerned government levels in order to ensure the speedy implementation of the Pact, with respect for the division of competences between the various entities. A steering committee to monitor and support the Pact will be installed within the Chancellery (of the Prime Minister). The detailed rules will be defined in 2017 on the basis of a policy note.	

BG	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: -** **MIP: CSR 2, 3**
	1. Achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,5 % of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and in 2017. **Further improve tax collection and take measures to reduce the extent of the informal economy**, including undeclared work.	**Some progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): The assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact will be made in spring when final data for 2016 will be available. **Some progress** in improving tax collection and reducing the extent of the informal economy. The government adopted in October 2015 the Single National Strategy (SNS) 2015-2017 for improving tax collection, tackling the shadow economy and reducing compliance costs. The implementation of the SNS and its accompanying action plan is ongoing with some of the measures already in place. Additional measures such as risk based controls on enterprises and enhanced controls on products subject to excise duties are also being implemented. Tax revenue is increasing and part of this increase can be attributed to improved collection, but the size of the shadow economy remains high. To tackle undeclared work the authorities have increased labour inspections but more effort seems to be needed in this area. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Convergence Programme for Bulgaria (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"In 2016, Bulgaria achieved a balanced general government budget and a small surplus in structural terms (0.1% of GDP). This translates into an adjustment of 1.5% of GDP in both nominal and structural terms. Having achieved this fiscal outcome,* ***Bulgaria remains with a large margin within the requirements of the SGP, and is fully compliant with the 2016 country specific recommendation by the Council,*** *which required an*	**1. Further improve tax collection and tax compliance,** including through a comprehensive set of measures beyond 2017. **Step up enforcement of measures to reduce the extent of the informal economy**, in particular undeclared work.

		annual fiscal adjustment of 0.5% of GDP in 2016 and 2017. *In 2017, despite the planned deterioration of the general government balance to -0.6% of GDP, Bulgaria is expected to remain well below the Treaty reference value for the headline deficit. In structural terms, the estimated deficit of 0.5% of GDP is below, by a large margin, the MTO set by the national Public Finance Act. Similarly, in 2018, Bulgaria is expected to remain fully compliant with the provisions of both the preventive and the corrective arms of the SGP, as the convergence programme envisages some fiscal improvement."* (p. 18)	
	2. By the end of 2016, **finalise the asset quality review and stress test of the banks**. By the end of 2016, **complete the balance-sheet review and stress test of the insurance companies and the review of private pension funds' assets**. Take, as necessary, follow-up actions in all three sectors and **continue to improve banking and non-banking supervision**.	**Some progress:** **<u>Some progress</u>** in finalising the asset quality review and stress test of the banks. The results of the review and stress tests were published but the degree of independence and the nature of the stress tests did not fully comply with the recommendation. **<u>Substantial progress</u>** in completing the balance-sheet review and stress test of the insurance companies and the review of private pension funds' assets. The reviews were completed to a high degree of independence and transparency. Some issues, including valuing illiquid financial instruments and assets as well as related-party transactions, were not fully tackled. **<u>Limited progress</u>** in taking, as necessary, follow-up actions in all three financial sectors and in improving banking and non-banking supervision. The two supervisors have issued follow-up actions resulting from the reviews and stress tests. Those actions remain to be implemented. The BNB's action plan on banking supervision is being implemented albeit with delays in some important areas. The IMF/WB review is ongoing. Non-bank supervision remains to be improved by tackling the issues highlighted by the reviews.	**2. Take follow-up measures on the financial sector reviews**, in particular concerning reinsurance contracts, group-level oversight, hard-to-value assets and related-party exposures. **Improve banking and non-banking supervision** through the implementation of comprehensive action plans, in close cooperation with European bodies. **Facilitate the reduction of still-high non-performing corporate loans**, by drawing on a comprehensive set of tools, including by accelerating the reform of the insolvency framework and by promoting a functioning secondary market for non-performing loans.

	3. Reinforce and integrate social assistance, including relevant social services, and active labour market policies, in particular for the long-term unemployed and young people not in employment, education or training. **Increase the provision of quality education for disadvantaged groups**, including Roma. **Improve the efficiency of the health system** by improving access and funding, and health outcomes. In consultation with social partners **establish guidelines and criteria for setting the minimum wage**. Increase the coverage and adequacy of the minimum income scheme.	**Limited rogress:** **Some progress** in reinforcing and integrating social assistance, including relevant social services, and active labour market policies, in particular for the long-term unemployed and young people not in employment, education or training. Bulgaria initiated a pilot project to introduce integrated Centres for Employment and Social Assistance and plans to add 8 new centres in remote areas to the existing 65. Many unemployed have already been serviced by these centres. The working methods between the Employment Agency and Agency for Social Assistance have improved. However, there is a limited provision of social services to support the long term unemployed taking a job, as local municipalities – the main social services providers – have not been involved. Efforts to address the high percentage of young people not in employment, education or training have started yielding results as the implementation of the Youth Guarantee is speeding up. However employment indicators are still worrying. There are several projects at national level based on the plans of municipalities and funded by the European Social Fund which aim at providing integrated services for Roma, migrants and the disadvantaged, including employment, education, housing and social services. Many of those in target groups are long term unemployed. **Limited progress** in increasing the provision of quality education for disadvantaged groups, including Roma. Despite budgetary increases, ensuring the necessary funding for the ongoing reform is a challenge and the financial standard has not yet been adopted. School performance indicators and the methodology for funding based on performance have yet to be developed. The provision banning segregated classes within the same school/kindergarten needs to be properly implemented and monitored, but such mechanisms remain weak. Following the entry into force of the new School Education Act in August 2016, a new education standard will focus on	**3. Improve the targeting of active labour market policies** and the integration between employment and social services for disadvantaged groups. Increase the provision of quality mainstream education, in particular for Roma. **Increase health insurance coverage**, reduce out-of-pocket payments and address shortages of healthcare professionals. In consultation with social partners, **establish a transparent mechanism for setting the minimum wage.** Improve the coverage and adequacy of the minimum income.

		intercultural education[1] and will be implemented for the first time this school year. **Limited progress** in improving the efficiency of the health system by improving access and funding, and health outcomes. Most measures concerning pharmaceutical pricing which aim at reducing costs of medicines are not expected to go into force until the beginning of 2017 at the earliest. Others like contracting of hospital services based on the National Health Map are implemented only partially – contracts for hospitals until April 2017 were set based on historical data. A significant part of the population remains without health insurance coverage. **Limited progress** in establishing guidelines and criteria for setting the minimum wage. Progress on devising a minimum wage setting mechanism is also limited; there seems to be general agreement among the government and social partners on the way forward, however this still needs to be put in practice. **Limited progress** in increasing the coverage and adequacy of the minimum income scheme. It is now possible to apply for benefits irrespective of the place of residence. Earnings from one day and dual education contracts will be excluded from the means testing. Heating benefits for the 2016/2017 winter season were marginally increased. However, the extent of measures planned to increase the coverage and adequacy of the minimum income scheme does not correspond to the magnitude of poverty in the country and do not allow the benefits to keep their safety net function over time.	

[1] The adopted standard is less ambitious than initially planned as it includes 'Civic, health, environment and intercultural education' but it is still a step forward to a more inclusive and innovative methods of education. The programme is to be adopted by the schools depending on their needs. Center Amalipe has shared their experience in this respect and published guidance for schools on how to plan activities in this respect.

	4. Reform the insolvency framework to accelerate recovery and resolution procedures and improve their effectiveness and transparency. Increase the capacity of the courts regarding insolvency procedures. **Strengthen the capacity of the Public Procurement Agency** and contracting authorities and improve the design and control of public tendering procedures, in particular by **fully implementing the National Strategy for the development of the Public Procurement Sector (2014-2020)**. Speed up the introduction of e-procurement.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** in reforming the insolvency framework to accelerate recovery and resolution procedures as well as improving their effectiveness and transparency as well as increasing the capacity of the courts regarding insolvency procedures. The insolvency reform effort has been slow despite the high level of private sector debt and mediocre performance of the insolvency proceedings framework. Improvement efforts in the legislative as well as judicial framework do not match the size of the problem. According to the assessment of the Commission, beyond the proper implementation of the announced initiatives, further steps are needed, in particular in the judicial system. Amendments to the Commerce Act and the Pledge Registry have only recently been adopted. They will need to be complemented with improvements in the infrastructure of the judicial system and in judges' capacity to handle insolvency cases. **Some progress** in strengthening the capacity of the Public Procurement Agency and contracting authorities and improving the design and control of public tendering procedures […] and limited progress in speeding up the introduction of e-procurement. A number of actions have already been undertaken by the Bulgarian government. However, the majority of them is currently at an early stage of implementation, so that their practical effects still need to be seen and assessed. The authorities have only started the tendering process for the e-procurement system.	**4. Ensure efficient implementation of the 2014-2020 National Public Procurement Strategy.**

CZ	**Country Specific Recommendations 2016** **SGP: -** **MIP: -**	**Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016** **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	**Country Specific Recommendations 2017** **SGP: -** **MIP: -**
	1. Take measures to **ensure the long-term sustainability of public finances**, in light of future risks in the area of healthcare. Adopt legislation to strengthen the fiscal framework.	**Some progress:** **Limited progress** has been made in ensuring the long-term sustainability of public finance. Some measures in the healthcare sector are at various stages of adoption, including a draft law on using Pharmacy Cost-Based Groups to provide for a more equitable distribution of funds among health insurance companies. On the other hand, the government has approved a proposal to cap the retirement age at 65 after around 2030, which is likely to worsen the long-term sustainability of pensions. **Substantial progress** has been made on the adoption of the legislation to strengthen the fiscal framework. The proposed fiscal legislation to implement Directive 2011/85/EU on budgetary frameworks was approved by the parliament in January 2017.	**1. Ensure the long-term sustainability of public finances**, in view of the ageing population. **Increase the effectiveness of public spending**, in particular by fighting corruption and inefficient practices in public procurement.
	2. Reduce regulatory and administrative barriers to investment, in particular in transport and energy, and increase the availability of e-government services. **Adopt the outstanding anti-corruption reforms and improve public procurement practices.**	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** has been achieved in reducing regulatory and administrative barriers to investment. With regards to energy investment, the use of EU funds for energy efficiency projects has been delayed. The administration of the related Operational Programmes is fragmented. To simplify and accelerate the permit procedure, the government has presented a draft amendment of the Construction Act, which is currently under discussion in the parliament. **Limited progress** has been achieved towards increasing the availability of e-government services. The measures taken are showing some results but most are still at an early stage of implementation or not yet initiated. Responsibility for the rollout of e-government services is spread over several ministries. Stakeholders perceive limited cross-sector cooperation.	**2. Remove obstacles to growth**, in particular by streamlining procedures for granting building permits and further reducing the administrative burden on businesses, by rolling out key e-government services, by **improving the quality of R&D** and by fostering employment of underrepresented groups.

		Some progress has been made towards adopting the outstanding anti-corruption reforms. The parliament adopted several laws, in particular the Act on Political Party Financing, the Conflict of Interest Law, the Act on Declaring the Origin of Property and the Public Procurement Act. However, several important measures from the anti-corruption plan for 2016 remain unimplemented. **Limited progress** has been made in improving public procurement practices. Despite the slightly delayed transposition of the modernised public procurement directives, no specific measures were announced to cope with the systemic shortcomings in the application of the public procurement legislation, in particular low use of quality criteria in tenders, unprofessionally prepared tender specifications, excessive use of negotiated procedures without prior publication and low use of aggregated procurement.	
	3. Strengthen governance in the R & D system and facilitate the links between academia and enterprises. Raise the attractiveness of the teaching profession and take measures to increase the inclusion of disadvantaged children, including Roma, in mainstream schools and pre-schools. **Remove the obstacles to greater labour market participation** by under-represented groups, in particular women.	**Some progress:** **Limited progress** has been made in strengthening governance in the R&D system and facilitating the links between academia and enterprises. While progress has been observed in terms of developing a more comprehensive funding methodology, governance in the sense of a separate function to be provided by the government to all R&D bodies has not yet been sufficiently addressed. Further, cooperation between academia and enterprises has not yet been incorporated into the funding and evaluation framework. **Substantial progress** has been made in raising the attractiveness of the teaching profession by increasing teachers' salary by 8 % in September 2016. The government also adopted a new draft career system for teachers and pedagogical staff, the aim of which is to link professional development, career and remuneration. **Some progress** has been made towards increasing the inclusion of disadvantaged children. The reform on inclusive education got underway in September 2016 which makes it too early to assess the impact. It aims to	*See CSR 2 (R&D, employment of under-represented groups)*

		gradually increase the participation of pupils with special needs — including socially disadvantaged pupils — in mainstream education by granting them a legal right to individual support measures. Only a limited number of pupils have benefited from the reform to date. Aside from the absence of a piloting period, this may be partly due to the fact that the reform is being implemented gradually over a period of two years. **Some progress** has been made in removing obstacles to greater labour market participation by under-represented groups, in particular women. Labour market participation of women improved in 2015, climbing up to 66.4 %. Proposed amendments to the Labour Code are aimed at strengthening both the flexibility of labour arrangements and the protection of employees. A proposed amendment to the law on social support makes the drawing of parental allowance more flexible. The implementation of ESF-supported projects creating new places in childcare facilities continues — almost 10 000 places have been created to date, while new 'micro-nurseries' are being piloted. A pilot project supporting job-related mobility of the long-term unemployed is being implemented.	

DK	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CRS 1** **MIP: -**	**Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016** **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	**Country Specific Recommendations 2017** **SGP: -** **MIP: -**
	1. Respect the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,25 % of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2017.	In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Convergence Programme for Denmark (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"**The assessment of the convergence programme for Denmark shows that Denmark complied with the provisions of the Stability and Growth Pact in 2016 and is also expected to be compliant over the programme period, i.e. from 2017 to 2020.*** *The structural fiscal position is estimated to remain balanced or positive between 2016 and 2020. Although these estimates benefit from excluding the volatile pension yield taxes from the recalculated structural balance, the growth of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures and one-offs, indicates overachievement of the applicable expenditure benchmark rate in 2016, as well as over the programme period."* (p. 14)	
	2. Enhance productivity and private sector investment by increasing competition in the domestic services sector, in particular by facilitating market entry in retail and construction. Incentivise the cooperation between businesses and universities.	**Some progress:** **Some progress** has been made in enhancing productivity and private sector investment. On facilitating market access in retail: in January 2017 the government presented a proposal to the Parliament to amend the Planning Act. However, since this proposal has not yet been adopted, the assessment is limited progress. There was some progress on facilitating market access in construction, following the mapping of standards in 2015, the updating of the law on electrical installations in 2015, and the proposed amendments to the Building Regulation to simplify procedures. **Some progress** has been made on incentivising cooperation between businesses and universities: There is some initiative from the national authorities to strengthen the links between universities and the private sector	**1. Foster competition in the domestically oriented services sector.**

		through dialogues involving both parties, new guidelines and specific programmes that stimulate collaboration. These include notably the efforts of the Danish Agency for Science and Technology together with Universities Denmark, a more prominent role given to the research and technology organisations, and the new Innovation Fund Denmark created with the ambition of supporting investments and long-term projects/partnerships that involve research, technology, demonstration and market development activities. Moreover, the Ministry of Higher Education and Science in June 2016 renegotiated the university performance contracts for 2015-2017 which introduced an additional performance targets on regional knowledge transfer activities.	

DE	[Country Specific Recommendations 2016](#) **SGP: -** **MIP: CRS 1, 2, 3**	[Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016](#) **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	[Country Specific Recommendations 2017](#) **SGP: -** **MIP: CSR 1, 2**
	1. Achieve a sustained upward trend in public investment, especially in infrastructure, education, research and innovation, while respecting the medium term objective. Improve the design of federal fiscal relations with a view to increasing public investment, especially at municipal level.	**Some progress:** **Some progress** has been made in increasing investment in public infrastructure. The federal infrastructure plan 2030 announces significant increases in transport infrastructure investment. If implemented effectively, the planned transport infrastructure company could be a step forward in addressing the barriers to investment identified in last year's country report. Funds provided for investment in transport infrastructure in the federal budget have increased in recent years. **Limited progress** has been made in increasing public expenditure on education and no additional measures have been taken in this regard. Despite more spending by the Federal Government, expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP at the level of general government has remained stable in recent years and well below the EU average. Overall public and private education and research expenditure has increased only slightly in recent years and may have fallen short of the national target of 10 % of GDP. **Limited progress** has been made in increasing public expenditure on research and innovation and no additional measures have been taken in this regard. Public expenditure on R&D has remained stable at around 0.9 % of GDP in recent years and total public and private expenditure stabilised at around 2.9 % of GDP in 2014 and 2015. **Some progress** has been made in improving the scope for public investment, including at federal state and municipal level, though it remains to be seen to what extent this additional fiscal space will actually be used for more public investment. The Federal Government is further relieving federal states and municipalities of expenditure relating to	**1.** While respecting the medium-term objective, **use fiscal and structural policies to support potential growth and domestic demand as well as to achieve a sustained upward trend in investment**. Accelerate public investment at all levels of government, especially in education, research and innovation, and address capacity and planning constraints for infrastructure investments. Further **improve the efficiency and investment-friendliness of the tax system. Stimulate competition in business services and regulated professions.**

		asylum seekers and refugees and other social spending, which should increase their scope for public investment. The transfers to the federal states comprise an annual lump sum of EUR 2 billion over the period 2016-2018 through an equivalent increase in the federal states' share of joint VAT revenue. They also include compensation for the cost of accommodation allowances for those granted asylum, amounting to EUR 400 million in 2016, EUR 900 million in 2017 and EUR 1.3 billion in 2018. As of 2018, the municipalities will receive an additional EUR 5 billion of relief annually through a combination of a higher share of municipalities in joint VAT revenue and an increased federal contribution to the funding of the accommodation allowance for the long-term unemployed. In total, the relief planned for 2016 amounted to about 0.1 % of GDP (or 5.4 % of the gross fixed capital formation of the federal states and municipalities in 2015), rising to around 0.3 % of GDP (20 %) by 2018. The planned reform of federal fiscal relations that will take effect in 2020 (see Box 4.4.3) should also improve the conditions for public investment at all levels of government. The adoption of the related constitutional changes and implementing legislation by both the Federal Parliament and the Federal Council representing the federal states is envisaged for spring 2017. The extra revenue allocated to the federal states – estimated at around EUR 9.7 billion in 2020 (0.3 % of 2015 GDP), rising to EUR 13 billion by 2030 – should increase the scope for public investment both at federal state and municipal level in the longer term. However, the reform falls short of more fundamental changes in terms of increasing the tax autonomy of federal states and municipalities, which could have further increased the scope for public investment. The planned federal transport infrastructure company could alleviate significant barriers to public infrastructure investment. The recent extension of the services of the existing independent consulting firm (ÖPP Deutschland AG)	

		that promotes public private partnerships to include the whole public sector should also boost the planning and implementation of infrastructure investment, particularly at municipal level.	
	2. Reduce inefficiencies in the tax system, in particular by reviewing corporate taxation and the local trade tax, modernise the tax administration and review the regulatory framework for venture capital. **Step up measures to stimulate competition in the services sector,** in particular in business services and regulated professions.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** has been made in reducing inefficiencies in the tax system. The law on the reform of investment fund taxation aims at simplifying the taxation of public investment funds and at closing some loopholes for tax avoidance. Key elements are that public funds will be subject to corporate taxation, while the transparency principle will be abolished. No measures have been taken to review corporate taxation and the local trade tax. **Limited progress** has been made in modernising the tax administration. The law on modernising taxation procedures aims at strengthening the automatic processing of tax returns. Previous requirements to submit supporting documents have largely been abolished. Combined with a stronger emphasis on risk-based audits, this also prepares the ground for a more efficient and effective tax administration. If implemented effectively, additional general and IT-specific functional authority of the federal tax administration in relation to the states' tax administrations as agreed as part of the reform of federal fiscal relations could facilitate an accelerated modernisation of the tax administration. Several additional measures to curb tax evasion and avoidance have been proposed by the Federal Government. **Some progress** has been made in reviewing the regulatory framework for venture capital. The Federal Government has adopted a draft law to improve the loss carry-forward for companies that have a change in	*See CSR 1 (reducing inefficiencies in the tax system, increasing competition in the services sector)*

		shareholders but continue their core business. This is to facilitate access to venture capital for young and innovative companies, particularly in later start-up stages. Step up measures to stimulate competition in the services sector, in particular in business services and regulated professions. **<u>Limited progress</u>** has been made in stimulating competition in the services sector. The Federal Government plans some limited modifications for certain liberal professions and business services, partly in response to national court decisions having declared some existing regulations unlawful. This concerns the prohibition of medical doctors and lawyers on offering services in partnership and mandatory tariffs for tax advisers. However, there is no strategy to substantially modernise the regulated professions and to strengthen competition in the services sector.	
	3. Increase incentives for later retirement and reduce disincentives to work for second earners. Reduce the high tax wedge for low wage earners and facilitate the transition from mini-jobs to standard employment.	**Limited progress:** **<u>Limited progress</u>** has been made in increasing incentives for later retirement. A law on facilitating the transition of older workers into retirement ('Flexi-Rente') has been adopted. It mainly aims to make the transition of older workers into retirement more flexible. In particular, the reform promotes the combination of early retirement and part-time work by reducing pension deductions in the event of extra income. It also incentivises employment above retirement age for employees by enabling them to acquire additional pension entitlements as well as for employers, by releasing them from the obligation to pay unemployment insurance contributions for employees above retirement age. It is too early to assess to what extent the reform may offset the stronger incentives for early retirement introduced by the last pension reform and the impact of an ageing population. Further assessment and monitoring appears required in this regard.	**2. Reduce disincentives to work for second earners** and facilitate transitions to standard employment. **Reduce the high tax wedge for low-wage earners. Create conditions to promote higher real wage growth**, respecting the role of the social partners.

		No progress has been made in reducing disincentives to work for second earners. No initiatives have been taken or announced in this regard. **Limited progress** has been made in reducing the high tax wedge for low-wage earners. The Federal Government adopted a package of measures aimed at safeguarding the minimum subsistence level and compensating for fiscal drag. The basic personal income tax allowance, the child allowance, the child benefit and the child supplement will be increased in 2017 and 2018 to align them with the adjusted subsistence level in accordance with existing law. Moreover, the income tax brackets will be adjusted to offset the impact of fiscal drag based on the tax progression report that is published every two years. These measures largely aim at adjusting for price developments and tend to benefit in particular low and middle income groups. However, only a limited impact on the tax wedge, if any, can be expected. **No progress** has been made in facilitating the transition from mini-jobs to standard employment. No initiatives have been taken or announced in this regard.	

EE	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: -** **MIP: -**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. Ensure the provision and accessibility of high-quality public services, especially social services, at local level, inter alia, by adopting and implementing the proposed local government reform. **Adopt and implement measures to narrow the gender pay gap,** including those foreseen in the Welfare Plan.	**Some progress:** **Some progress** in ensuring the provision and accessibility of high-quality social services at local level. Implementation is ongoing for the Social Welfare Act and the measures under the 2016-2020 action plan for the 2016-2023 welfare development plan. **Some progress** in adopting and implementing the local government reform. The Administrative Reform Act was adopted in July 2016. The voluntary merger of municipalities, lasting until the end of 2016 was successful, leading to an initial decrease in the number of municipalities from 213 to 100. **Limited progress** in reducing the gender pay gap. The 2016-2023 welfare development plan and its 2016-2020 action plan were adopted in June 2016. One out of the plan's four main areas aims at ensuring equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for men and women in all areas of society. Due to the late approvals, the progress on implementing specific measures to reduce the gender pay gap is delayed. The amendments to the Gender Equality Act are expected to enable the Labour Inspectorate to monitor gender equality in the private sector. They are planned for March. Also important are changes to the parental leave system to improve flexibility and ensure more equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men. The government discussed and gave political guidelines on the scope and timetable of the parental leave system on 26th January.	**1. Pursue its fiscal policy in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact**, which entails remaining at its medium-term budgetary objective in 2018. Improve the adequacy of the social safety net. **Take measures to reduce the gender pay gap**, in particular by improving wage transparency and reviewing the parental leave system.

	2. Promote private investment in research, development and innovation, including by strengthening cooperation between academia and businesses.	**Some progress:** Private investment in R&D is bottoming out at 0.69 % GDP. Cooperation between businesses and academia remains weak. However, Estonia has made **some progress** in addressing the CSR: At the end of 2016, Estonia had already selected ERDF operations worth EUR 277 million under the priority axis on research, technological development and innovation of the Operational Programme for Cohesion Policy Funds 2014-2020. This is equivalent to 43 % of the total ERDF budget (EUR 642 million) for the axis concerned. Estonia also finalised in 2016 the remaining legal acts for the activities under this axis. In 2016, the government launched a business development programme for firms with high-growth potential, launched specific support for the public procurement of innovation and promoted the increased use of financial instruments. An ‘Industrial Policy Green Book’ is also being developed. There will be further support to public research organisations for applied research and development of products in cooperation with business, in areas addressed by the smart specialisation strategy. Changes are being introduced to the baseline funding of public research organisations to provide incentives for contract research with business. The share of institutional funding and project-based financing for research will be gradually raised to 50/50 (under the ruling coalition agreement). Specialised R&D civil servant profiles have been created in line ministries in 2016 under the ‘RITA’ programme. The aim is to help deliver R&D priorities closer to business needs in smart specialisation areas. Finally, doctoral studies in cooperation with entreprises and support for business to participate in technology development centres and clusters are being implemented.	**2. Promote private investment in research, technology and innovation**, including by implementing measures for strengthening the cooperation between academia and businesses.

IE	[Country Specific Recommendations 2016] **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 3**	[Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016] **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	[Country Specific Recommendations 2017] **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 3**
	1. Following the correction of the excessive deficit, **achieve an annual fiscal adjustment** of 0,6 % of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and in 2017. Use windfall gains from strong economic and financial conditions, as well as from asset sales, to accelerate debt reduction. **Reduce vulnerability to economic fluctuations and shocks, inter alia, by broadening the tax base. Enhance the quality of expenditure**, particularly by increasing cost-effectiveness of healthcare and by prioritising government capital expenditure in R & D and in public infrastructure, in particular transport, water services and housing.	**Some progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): The compliance assessment with the Stability and Growth Pact will be included in Spring when final data for 2016 will be available. **Limited progress** in reducing the vulnerability to economic fluctuations and shocks. The announced establishment of a 'rainy-day fund', if appropriately designed, could provide a fiscal buffer during a future economic downturn. Together with the announced long-term target of 45 % for the debt-to-GDP ratio, the fund could help to reduce vulnerability to economic fluctuations. However, in the short term, the Draft Budgetary Plan for 2017 has introduced a wide range of tax expenditure measures, including a tax rebate for first-time buyers of newly-built homes, and increases in tax credits for the self-employed and home carers. These are likely to narrow the income tax base, thereby increasing the exposure of public finances to shocks. This is in addition to the suspension of water charge payments earlier this year, and the decision to further delay, until November 2019, the revaluation of self-assessed property values used to calculate local property tax liabilities. In isolation, the phasing out of the Universal Social Charge will undermine the commitment to maintain a broad tax base. **Some progress** in enhancing the quality of expenditure through a reform of the budgetary process. This can help to improve communication on expenditure targets, increase stakeholder engagement and harness public support to improve the quality of expenditure. A 'culture of spending' to, for example, increase responsibility across the public administration for assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure is being developed. The roll-out of activity-based funding, the development of new eHealth architecture, the streamlining of financial management and	**1. Pursue a substantial fiscal effort in 2018 in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact**. Use any windfall gains arising from the strong economic and financial conditions, including proceeds from asset sales, to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. **Limit the scope and the number of tax expenditures and broaden the tax base**.

		information systems and the new cost-saving deal with the pharmaceutical industry are also steps forward. **<u>Some progress</u>** in prioritising government capital expenditure. Public expenditure marginally grew from EUR 814 million in 2014 to EUR 843 million in 2015. Specific R&D Programmes being funded by the Capital Plan include commitments in respect of Cycle 5 of the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions. However, low public R&D intensity continues to cause concern (decreasing at 0.33 % GDP in 2015). According to the Draft Budgetary Plan for 2017, capital expenditure will increase by 9 % compared to 2016. Investment will focus primarily on social housing and education. Ireland is planning to increase public investment while rebalancing priorities between current and capital spending. On 19 July the government published a housing action plan involving the allocation of a further EUR 2.2 billion (approximately 40 % of total capital spending) to social housing over the next four years, in addition to the EUR 3.8 billion already committed by the last government. The action plan envisages an increase in social housing units by approximately 47 000 and an increase in housing output of around 25 000 per year. It aims to create a EUR 200 million Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund, which will contribute to contribute to the delivery of transport, water and other infrastructure essential to an increase in housing supply. The government proposes to expedite the development of a number of large urban sites with the capacity to deliver up to 20 000 new homes. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its [Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Ireland]() (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"In 2016, Ireland achieved an improvement of 0.3% of GDP in the structural balance, below the recommended structural adjustment of 0.6% of GDP. The growth of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures and one-offs, exceeded the applicable expenditure benchmark, leading to a negative impact of nearly 0.5% of GDP on the underlying fiscal position.* ***Following an overall assessment, the Commission forecast points to some***	

		deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO. *In the stability programme, Ireland plans improvements in the structural balance of 0.3% and 0.6% of GDP in 2017 and 2018, respectively. This is expected to be conducive to the MTO being reached in 2018. These plans imply a deviation of 0.3% of GDP from the required adjustment towards the MTO in 2017. Moreover, the growth of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures and one-offs, is planned to exceed the expenditure benchmark in 2017. The assessment based on the information provided in the stability programme points to a risk of a significant deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO over 2016 and 2017 taken together. Based on the Commission forecast, the projected improvement in the structural balance of 0.6% of GDP in 2017 is in line with the recommended fiscal effort. However, the growth of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures and one-offs, is expected to exceed the expenditure benchmark, leading to a negative impact of nearly 0.5% of GDP.* ***The overall assessment based on the Commission forecast points to a risk of a significant deviation over 2016 and 2017 taken together.*** *In 2018, based on the information provided in the stability programme, Ireland is expected to comply with the recommended adjustment path toward the MTO. However, according to the Commission forecast, under unchanged policy, the growth of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures and one-offs, is expected to exceed the expenditure benchmark, while the structural balance is expected to be in line with the required fiscal effort. The overall assessments based on the Commission forecast point to a risk of some deviation over 2017 and 2018 taken together.* *At the same time, compliance with the transitional debt rule is ensured between over 2016-2018.”* (p. 20)	

	2. Expand and accelerate the implementation of activation policies to **increase the work intensity of households and address the poverty risk of children**. Pursue measures to **incentivise employment by tapering the withdrawal of benefits and supplementary payments**. Improve the provision of quality, affordable full-time childcare.	**Some progress:** **Some progress** in increasing households work intensity. Labour activation programmes have been rolled out further but their effects have not yet been assessed by the government. New announced measures, such as 'Pathways to Work for Jobless Households', are likely to increase the work intensity of households. **Some progress** in reducing child poverty. The government continues to implement previous measures but child benefit remains at EUR 140 per month. The benefits for lone parents is envisaged to increase from 2017. **Some progress** in incentivising employment. The Back to Work Family Dividend, set up in 2015, currently reaches 21 000 dependent young people. Budget 2017 announced additional funding for the Housing Assistance Payment, which is designed to tackle work disincentives arising from housing subsidies for the unemployed. This support is expected to reach an additional 15 000 people. **Some progress** in improving childcare provision. Ireland has taken steps to make childcare more affordable and improve its quality, but sustained efforts are needed over coming years to meet existing needs, especially among disadvantage families. Measures are also underway to improve the quality of childcare provision.	**2. Better target government expenditure**, by prioritising public investment in transport, water services, and innovation in particular in support of SMEs. **Enhance social infrastructure**, including social housing and quality childcare; deliver an integrated package of activation policies to **increase employment prospects of low-skilled people and to address low work intensity of households.**
	3. Finalise durable restructuring solutions to lower non-performing loans, to ensure debt sustainability of households and to encourage lenders to reduce the debt of excessively leveraged yet viable businesses. **Accelerate the phasing-in of a fully operational central credit registry covering all categories of lenders and debtors.**	**Some progress:** **Some progress** in adopting restructuring solutions sustainable in the long term. As the overall level of non-performing decreases, the more difficult long-term arrears cases make up an increasingly higher share of the remaining stock. Repossessions remain low and the legal route lengthy. Following a pilot phase, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service for distressed debtors was launched nationally. In the first couple of months it registered significant interest, with over 2 800 free advice vouchers given out, of which the majority were used for financial counselling. **Some progress** in phasing-in the central credit registry. The consultation with the data Protection Commissioner has	**3. Encourage a continued and more durable reduction in non-performing loans** through resolution strategies that involve write-offs for viable businesses and households, with a special emphasis on resolving long-term arrears.

		been concluded the regulations published by the Central Bank of Ireland. However, delays in implementing the central credit register mean that it will not be fully operational until late 2018.	

EL	Country Specific Recommendations 2016	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 (COM Country Report, February 2017)	Country Specific Recommendations 2017
	To avoid duplication with measures set out in the Economic Adjustment Programme, there are no additional recommendations for Greece.		To avoid duplication with measures set out in the Economic Adjustment Programme, there are no additional recommendations for Greece.

ES	[Country Specific Recommendations 2016](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4**	[Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016](#) **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	[Country Specific Recommendations 2017](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3**
	1. Ensure a durable correction of the excessive deficit, in accordance with the relevant decisions or recommendations under the excessive deficit procedure, by taking the necessary structural measures and by using all windfall gains for deficit and debt reduction. **Implement at all government levels the tools set out in the fiscal framework law**. Enhance control mechanisms for public procurement and coordination of procurement policies across government levels.	**Limited progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): **Some progress** has been made to strengthen Spain's fiscal framework. The updated DBP for 2017 reports that the government will assess, with the assistance of regional and local governments, the Stability law's spending rule, with a view to removing inconsistencies with the SGP spending rule, without however, providing details and a timeline. The government has implemented in 2017 some provisions set out in Spain's Stability law that had never been implemented –such as the requirement to adopt cuts in expenditure appropriations for public administrations at risk of non-compliance with the fiscal targets. However, the government has disclosed no measures to further increase the automaticity of the Stability Law's mechanisms to prevent and correct deviations from the deficit, debt and expenditure targets. **Limited progress** has been made to strengthen Spain's public procurement policy framework. The updated 2017 DBP includes measures that can go some way towards improving some public procurement practices in Spain. However, they do not address the need for a consistent framework that ensures sufficient transparency and coordination of public procurement across all contracting authorities and entities. Furthermore, the reported measures do not spell out clear objectives for public procurement, instruments for action and a timeline for their adoption and implementation. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its [Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Spain](#) (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs):	**1. Ensure compliance with the Council Decision of 8 August 2016**, including also measures to strengthen the fiscal and public procurement frameworks. **Undertake a comprehensive expenditure review** in order to identify possible areas for improving spending efficiency.

		*"**In 2016, Spain achieved a headline deficit of 4.5% of GDP, slightly below the EDP deficit target of 4.6% of GDP.** The fiscal effort was delivered on the basis of the bottom-up method and slightly missed on the basis of the top-down method.* ***Spain plans to correct its excessive deficit by the 2018 deadline set by the Council, but the programme does not project to reach the MTO set in Spain's Stability Law within the programme horizon.*** *Based on the Commission 2017 spring forecast, the headline deficit is expected to decrease to 3.2% of GDP in 2017 and further to 2.6% of GDP in 2018. Short-term risks to the achievement of the fiscal targets relate to uncertainty regarding the impact of the recent tax measures. Moreover, taking into account the assumed materialisation of contingent liabilities (which are not included in the Commission forecast), the programme relies on considerably higher expenditure restraint than projected in the Commission forecast in 2017 and 2018.* *The projected improvement in the unadjusted structural balance falls short of the fiscal effort required by the Council in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Based on the adjusted change in the structural balance, the required fiscal effort is projected to be delivered in 2017, but to fall slightly short of the requirement in cumulative terms over 2016-2017. Based on the bottom-up method, the requested effort is respected in 2016 and also in cumulative terms over 2016-2017.* *In addition, in August 2016, the Council required Spain to take measures to improve its fiscal and public procurement policy frameworks. The stability programme does not report plans to improve its fiscal policy frameworks. On procurement, it reports on amendments made to the draft laws transposing the latest procurement directives, but some concerns flagged in the assessment of the updated 2017 draft budgetary plan remain."* (pp. 18-19)	

	2. Take further measures to improve labour market integration, by focusing on individualised support and strengthening the effectiveness of training measures. Enhance the capacity of regional employment services and reinforce their coordination with social services. **Address gaps and disparities in minimum income schemes and improve family support schemes, including access to quality childcare and long-term care.**	**Some progress:** In 2016 Spain adopted the three-year Joint Action Plan to enhance the assistance to long-term unemployed, aimed at strengthening the employment services' capacity to provide individualised support for long-term unemployed. The Protocols to develop the Common Employment Services Portfolio are being developed. **Some progress** has been made in improving labour market integration by focusing on individualised support. The Joint Action Plan to enhance the assistance to long-term unemployed lays down a limit of 120 beneficiaries per caseworker. Caseworkers should design an individualised pathway based on the profile of the unemployed, for which a profiling tool is being developed. Spain has made **some progress** in enhancing the capacity of regional employment services. The Joint Action Plan to enhance the assistance to long-term unemployed provides for EUR 515 million for 2016-2018. In 2016 Spain has finalised an evaluation of the regional employment services (EVADES), whose conclusions have not been translated into concrete action so far. There has been no significant action to reinforce coordination between the public employment and social services. **Limited progress** has been made in addressing gaps and disparities in minimum income schemes and improving family support schemes. The government will analyse the findings and recommendations of the in-depth evaluation of income guarantee systems and will work with the regions to improve the effectiveness of the schemes. In the area of long-term care some progress was made in terms of provision of services. The government plans to improve the conditions for access to the services, notably by simplifying the categories of dependency.	**2. Reinforce the coordination between regional employment services, social services and employers**, to better respond to jobseekers' and employers' needs. Take measures to promote hiring on open-ended contracts. **Address regional disparities and fragmentation in income guarantee schemes and improve family support**, including access to quality childcare. Increase the labour market relevance of tertiary education. **Address regional disparities in educational outcomes**, in particular by strengthening teacher training and support for individual students.

	3. Take further measures to improve the labour market relevance of tertiary education, including by incentivising cooperation between universities, firms and research institutions. **Increase performance-based funding** of public research bodies and universities and **foster R&I investment** by the private sector.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** was made as regards measures to foster public-private cooperation in research and innovation. There is no strategic approach to knowledge transfer. Only a few punctual measures have been taken: creation of a working groups with chambers of commerce; establishment of a new technological 6 years-term; creation of an industrial PhD scheme; tax incentives for companies hiring researchers. **Limited progress** made towards increasing performance-based funding of public research bodies and universities, and on fostering R&I investment by the private sector. The valuable initiatives under the "institutional strengthening" pillar of the National Plan for R&I can be a stepping stone for the further reinforcement of performance-based funding.	**3. Ensure adequate and sustained investment in research and innovation** and strengthen its governance across government levels. **Ensure a thorough and timely implementation of the law on market unity** for existing and forthcoming legislation.
	4. Accelerate the implementation of the law on market unity at regional level. Ensure implementation by the autonomous regions of the reform measures adopted for the retail sector. Adopt the planned reform on professional services and associations.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** has been made on the implementation of the market unity law at regional level, judging from the pace of adaptation of sectorial regulation to the principles of the law on market unity and from the number of agreements reached between the central and regional governments at sectorial conference level to develop regulatory frameworks adapted to that law, since the publication of the 2016 Country Report for Spain. Moreover, some regulations adopted by regions in the area of the collaborative economy may be contrary to the principles of the market unity law. **Limited progress** has been made on implementing the retail sector reform, as only some regions have adopted implementing measures. **No progress** has been made on reforming professional services. Spain has neither announced nor adopted any measures in this area in 2016.	*See CSR 3 (law on market unity)*

FR	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4, 5**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4**
	1. Ensure a durable correction of the excessive deficit by 2017 by taking the required structural measures and by using all windfall gains for deficit and debt reduction. **Specify the expenditure cuts** planned for the coming years and step up efforts to increase the amount of savings generated by the spending reviews, including on local government spending, by the end of 2016. **Reinforce independent public policy evaluations** in order to identify efficiency gains across all sub-sectors of general government.	**Limited progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): The compliance assessment with the Stability and Growth Pact will be included in spring when final data for 2016 will be available. **Limited progress** has been made in reinforcing the identification of savings and efficiency gains generated by the spending reviews and public policy evaluations. The savings made following the spending reviews in the PLF 2017 total EUR 400 million, which is a small amount given the structural efforts required. Also, the second wave of spending reviews has not resulted in any proposed savings. A number of further public policy evaluations were launched and a meta-evaluation is ongoing. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for France (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"**In 2016, France achieved a headline deficit of 3.4% of GDP, in line with the target under the EDP.** However, the fiscal effort has not been delivered based on all metrics.* ***France plans to correct its excessive deficit by the 2017 deadline set by the Council** and to ensure an improvement of the (recalculated) structural balance of 0.4% of GDP in both 2018 and 2019 and of 0.1% of GDP in 2020.* *Based on the Commission 2017 spring forecast, the headline deficit is expected to decrease to 3.0% of GDP in 2017 and to increase again to 3.2% of GDP in 2018*	**1. Ensure compliance with the Council recommendation of 10 March 2015 under the excessive deficit procedure.** Pursue a substantial fiscal effort in 2018 in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact, taking into account the need to strengthen the ongoing recovery and to ensure the sustainability of France's public finances. **Comprehensively review expenditure items** with the aim to make efficiency gains that translate into expenditure savings.

		at unchanged policies. A durable correction of the excessive deficit is therefore not ensured yet. Moreover, there are downside risks for the attainment of the deficit target in 2017. *The projected improvement in the structural balance falls short of the effort required by the Council in 2017 and on a cumulative basis over the period 2015-2017, based on all metrics.* *Should the excessive deficit be corrected in a durable manner by 2017, France would be subject to the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact from 2018 onwards and to the transition period as regards compliance with the debt criterion.* ***According to the Commission 2017 spring forecast, France would be at risk of significant deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO in 2018. Moreover, in 2018 France would not progress towards compliance with the debt criterion either.****"* (pp. 21-22)	
	2. Ensure that the labour cost reductions are sustained and that minimum wage developments are consistent with job creation and competitiveness. Reform the labour law to provide more incentives for employers to hire on open-ended contracts.	**Substantial progress:** **Substantial progress** has been made in ensuring that labour cost reductions are sustained. The second phase of reductions in employers' social security contributions planned under the solidarity and responsibility pact started in April 2016, after the first phase introduced in 2015. In addition, the government has increased the tax credit for competitiveness and employment (CICE) from 6 % to 7 %. The 2016 national reform programme announced that the CICE would be transformed into permanent reductions in employers' social security contributions by 2018, but no details are available at the moment. **Some progress** has been made in ensuring that changes in the minimum wage are consistent with job creation and competitiveness. The minimum wage followed its indexation rule, leading to a 0.6 % increase on 1 January 2016. No intent to review the indexation mechanism has been expressed by the government.	**2. Consolidate the measures reducing the cost of labour** to maximise their efficiency in a budget-neutral manner and in order to scale up their effects on employment and investment. **Broaden the overall tax base** and take further action to **implement the planned decrease in the statutory corporate-income rate.**

		Substantial progress has been made in reforming the labour law. The El Khomri law on labour, social dialogue and professional pathways was adopted in July 2016. However, its final effect will depend on its full implementation and on social partners taking ownership of the flexibility the law offers. The reform of Labour Courts introduced by the 2015 Macron law was completed with the adoption, in November 2016, of a decree reviewing the indicative ceilings for unjustified individual dismissals.	
	3. Improve the links between the education sector and the labour market, in particular by reforming apprenticeships and vocational training, with emphasis on the low-skilled. By the end of 2016, **take action to reform the unemployment benefit system** in order to bring the system back to budgetary sustainability and to provide more incentives to return to work.	**Limited progress:** **Some progress** has been made in improving the links between the education sector and the labour market. The implementation of the 2014 vocational training reform is ongoing. Apprenticeship figures stopped decreasing in 2015. The El Khomri labour law introduces a new personal activity account (CPA), entering into force in January 2017. It mostly reinforces training rights for non-qualified active workers. **No progress** has been made in reforming the unemployment benefit system. Social partners failed to agree on a new unemployment benefit convention in July, leading to an extension of the current 2014 convention. The timeline for adopting a reform of the unemployment benefit system is not clear yet.	**3. Improve access to the labour market for jobseekers**, in particular less-qualified workers and people with a migrant background, including by revising the system of vocational education and training. **Ensure that minimum wage developments are consistent with job creation and competitiveness.**
	4. Remove barriers to activity in the services sector, in particular in business services and regulated professions. Take steps to simplify and improve the efficiency of **innovation policy schemes**. By the end of 2016, **further reform the size-related criteria in regulations that impede companies' growth** and continue to simplify companies' administrative, fiscal and accounting rules by pursuing the simplification programme.	**Some progress:** **Some progress** has been made regarding the removal of barriers to activity in the regulated professions through sectoral legislation, notably the Loi Macron and the Loi Santé. France has adopted almost all the secondary legislation needed to implement provisions on liberalisation of professions that were not directly applicable. In other fields where reforms of the service sector were adopted in 2015 (e.g. home-care services), the legal framework was completed in 2016 and awaits implementation by local authorities. However, the ambition of measures to increase competition in regulated professions is lower than initially announced, mainly because of the implementation measures (for	**4. Further reduce the regulatory burden for firms**, including by pursuing the simplification programme. Continue to **lift barriers to competition in the services sector**, including in business services and regulated professions. Simplify and improve the efficiency of **public support schemes for innovation**.

		instance, as regards notaries). Some steps have also been taken to introduce competition in regional rail transport services for passengers on an experimental basis. **Limited progress** has been made to simplify and improve the efficiency of innovation policy schemes. While no recent measures have been adopted in this area, clear action to systematically evaluate innovation policy has been promoted in recent year(s), in particular by the National Commission for the Evaluation of Innovation Policies together with France Stratégie. These efforts include the evaluation of individual schemes (e.g. the CIR), and of the efficiency of the innovation policy as a whole. How these evaluations will be translated into policy practice is still to be seen. **No progress** to reform the size-related criteria in social and tax legislation has been made, as no new measures have been adopted in this area since the end of 2015. **Some progress** has been made to simplify companies' administrative, fiscal and accounting rules. The simplification programme is ongoing and encompasses new measures, but its implementation is slow. The 'Sapin II law' makes it easier for certain small companies to switch legal status, while it facilitates business creation by easing training requirements prior to starting a business and by removing the requirement for micro-entrepreneurs to open a second bank account at least during the first year of business.	
	5. Take action to reduce the taxes on production and the corporate income statutory rate while broadening the tax base on consumption, in particular as regards VAT. Remove inefficient tax expenditures, remove taxes that are yielding little or no revenue and adopt the withholding personal income tax reform by the end of 2016.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** has been made in reducing taxes on production and the corporate income. The last tranche of the turnover tax (C3S) has not been abolished and still weighs on 20 000 businesses. The statutory rate of corporate income tax will only be reduced to 28 % in 2017 for SMEs up to EUR 75 000 of profits. The objective of setting this rate at 28 % across the board by 2020 still stands. No progress on broadening the tax base on consumption, as the 2017 finance law does not remove or limit the use of reduced rates on VAT.	*See CSR 2 (broadening of the overall tax base, reduction in the corporate income statutory rate)*

		Some progress has been made in modernising the tax system. The withholding tax reform for personal income tax has been adopted by Parliament and will be introduced by 2018. However, tax expenditures keep increasing in number and in value and have exceeded the ceiling set in the 2014-2019 multiannual budgetary framework. In 2017, 14 new tax expenditures will be introduced while only 4 are to be suppressed and 5 come to an end. The removal of taxes yielding little or no revenue is progressing at a very slow pace.	

HR	[Country Specific Recommendations 2016] **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4, 5**	[Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016] **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	[Country Specific Recommendations 2017] **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4, 5**
	1. Ensure a durable correction of the excessive deficit by 2016. Thereafter, achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of at least 0,6 % of GDP in 2017. Use any windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. By September 2016, reinforce numerical fiscal rules and strengthen the independence and the mandate of the Fiscal Policy Commission. By the end of 2016, **improve budgetary planning and strengthen the multi-annual budgetary framework.** By the end of 2016, **start a reform of recurrent taxation of immovable property**. Reinforce the framework for public debt management. **Adopt and start implementing a debt management strategy for 2016-2018.**	**Limited progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): **Limited progress** in reinforcing numerical fiscal rules and strengthening the independence and the mandate of the Fiscal Policy Commission. While a new draft of the fiscal responsibility act and budget act were prepared, they have still not been adopted. **Limited progress** in improving budgetary planning and strengthen the multi-annual budgetary framework. **Some progress** in reforming recurrent property taxation. The authorities have introduced a simple recurrent real estate tax through amendments to the law on local taxes. The tax will enter into force as of 2018. **Some progress** regarding public debt management, related to the adopted debt management strategy, which covers the 2017-2019 period. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its [Assessment of the 2017 Convergence Programme for Croatia] (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"**In 2016**, the deadline for correcting the excessive deficit, **Croatia achieved a headline deficit of 0.8% of GDP, substantially lower than the headline deficit target of 2.7% of GDP under the EDP.** The Commission 2017 spring forecast projects the general government deficit to remain below the 3%-of-GDP Treaty reference value throughout the forecast period, while the debt ratio would decline in line with the*	**1. Pursue its fiscal policy in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact**, which entails remaining at its medium-term budgetary objective in 2018. By September 2017, **reinforce budgetary planning and the multi-annual budgetary framework**, including by strengthening the independence and mandate of the Fiscal Policy Commission. Take the necessary steps for the introduction of **the value-based property tax**. Reinforce the framework for public debt management, including by ensuring annual updates of the debt management strategy.

		forward-looking element of the debt reduction benchmark. *...After having over-achieved the MTO in 2016, the (recalculated) structural balance from the programme deteriorates back towards the MTO in 2017 and remains broadly stable in 2018, before slightly improving again.* *The revenue and expenditure growth projections in the programme for 2017 appear rather conservative in light of the slightly lower deficit projected in the Commission forecast. At the same time, downside risks to the budgetary targets in the programme stem from the impact of Agrokor's financial difficulties. Unlike the convergence programme, the Commission 2017 spring forecast incorporates the materialisation of some of these risks. However, as uncertainties over the outcome of the ongoing restructuring of Agrokor loom, risks remain, over and above what is already included in the Commission 2017 spring forecast. In addition, in the outer years of the programme, some of the planned expenditure growth restraint may be difficult to achieve. More generally, the absence of any quantification of the budgetary impact of the measures underpinning the budgetary projections of the programme hampers their proper assessment.* *Taking into account the balance of risks, the Commission spring forecast projects a deterioration of the structural balance to −2.1% of GDP for 2018.* ***An overall assessment points to a risk of some deviation from the MTO in that year. By contrast, Croatia is forecast to comply with the debt rule in 2017 and 2018.****"* (pp. 17-18)	
	2. By the end of 2016, **take measures to discourage early retirement, accelerate the transition to the higher statutory retirement age, and align pension provisions for specific categories with the rules of the general scheme.** Provide appropriate up- and re-skilling measures to enhance the employability of the working-age population, with a focus on the low-skilled	**No progress:** **No progress** in reforming the pension system Announced measures encouraging longer working lives and streamlining pension provisions have not been implemented. The authorities have completed a review of the arduous or hazardous professions benefiting from	**2. Discourage early retirement, accelerate the transition to the higher statutory retirement age and align pension provisions for specific categories with the rules of the general scheme**. Improve coordination and transparency of social benefits.

	and the long-term unemployed. **Consolidate social protection benefits**, including special schemes, by aligning eligibility criteria and integrating their administration, and focus support on those most in need.	more generous pension provisions. However, the planned streamlining has not yet taken place. **Limited progress** in providing up- and re-skilling measures. The programme for developing vocational education training has been adopted and new legislation is being prepared to improve adult learning. However, the scope of training actions provided by the Public Employment Services seems inadequate in view of the size of the challenge. There are no significant developments on recognition of skills and validation of non-formal and informal learning. **No progress** in improving the social protection system. The action plan setting out the reform priorities has not yet been adopted. The authorities have completed the analysis of benefits granted at central government level with a view to categorising them and harmonising eligibility criteria. The planned introduction of means-testing for the child allowance is currently being reviewed. The establishment of one-stop shops to administer and provide social services is being postponed for the second time in a year. This has delayed the implementation of all the related reform measures.	
	3. By the end of 2016, **start reducing fragmentation and improving the functional distribution of competencies in public administration** to improve efficiency and reduce territorial disparities in the delivery of public services. In consultation with social partners, harmonise the wage-setting frameworks across the public administration and public services. **Advance the divestment process of state assets and reinforce the monitoring of state-owned enterprises' performance** and boards' accountability, including by advancing the listing of shares of state-owned companies.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** in reforming the public administration. The main pillars of the reform have all been postponed due to lack of political commitment. In December 2016 the government adopted a new version of the 2017-2020 action plan for the modernisation of the public administration. New legislation redefining the division of tasks between the central and local state administration offices was due to be adopted in December 2016 but is still under preparation. There is no clear timetable for the plan to reduce the over 1 200 local branches of central administration offices by 20 %. The planned harmonisation and rationalisation of the state agencies system has been put on hold. **No progress** in harmonising the wage-setting frameworks. The adoption of new legislation on public	**4. Reduce the fragmentation and improve the functional distribution of competencies in public administration**, while enhancing the efficiency and reducing territorial disparities in the delivery of public services. In consultation with social partners, **harmonise the wage-setting frameworks across the public administration and public services.** *See CSR 5 (divestment process of state assets and reinforce the monitoring of state-owned enterprises' performance)*

		sector wages has been postponed by two years, to the end of 2019. Preparatory work has been carried out to develop an IT system to support the introduction of a universal system of wage grades. The authorities have also developed common guidelines for the negotiation, coordination and monitoring of collective agreements in the public administration. As far as state-owned enterprises are concerned, no further steps have been taken in setting up a coordinated system for collective bargaining. **Limited progress** in improving performance monitoring and corporate governance of state owned enterprises, and in divestment from state assets. Eight companies were removed from the government's list of companies and other legal entities of strategic and special interest, whereas the sale of stakes in non-strategic companies yielded income of 0.2 % of GDP in 2016.	
	4. Significantly reduce parafiscal charges. Remove unjustified regulatory restrictions hampering access to and the practice of regulated professions. **Reduce the administrative burden on businesses.**	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** in reducing parafiscal charges. The authorities have decreased or cut only five parafiscal charges, with an impact significantly lower than planned in the national reform programme. **Limited progress** in removing regulatory restrictions in regulated professions. An action plan was submitted in July 2016, but it entails only limited reform proposals and does not provide details on the substance of the amendments. For a number of professions, the action plan states that current regulation is adequate and no modification is needed. **Limited progress** in reducing the administrative burden. An action plan for the reduction of administrative burden was adopted by the government.	**5. Speed up the divestment of state-owned enterprises and other state assets, and improve corporate governance in the state-owned enterprise sector. Significantly reduce the burden on businesses** stemming from costs of regulation and from administrative burdens. **Remove regulatory restrictions** hampering access to and the practice of regulated professions and professional and business services. **Improve the quality and efficiency of the justice system**, in particular by reducing the length of civil and commercial cases.
	5. Take measures to **improve the quality and efficiency of the judicial system** in commercial and administrative courts. **Facilitate the resolution of non-performing loans**, in particular by improving the tax treatment of the resolution of non-performing loans.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** in improving the justice system. The number of pending cases and length of court proceedings remain among the highest in the EU. Few	*See CSR 5 (the quality and efficiency of the judicial system)*

		measures have been implemented to improve the efficiency of justice (e.g. limited introduction of case management reforms) and it will take time for the implemented judicial map reform to show effects. Improving the quality of the justice system remains a challenge, particularly the electronic communication with courts, where no measures have been implemented that would allow public bodies, parties and legal professionals to send and receive court documents in electronic form. **<u>Some progress</u>** in facilitating the resolution of non-performing loans, as sales accelerate. The recent tax reform's provisions on deductibility of non-performing loan write-offs may facilitate a faster resolution in 2017.	
			3. Improve adult education, in particular for older workers, the low-skilled and the long-term unemployed. **Accelerate the reform of the education system**.

IT	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4, 5**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4**
	1. In 2016, limit the temporary deviation from the required 0,5 % of GDP adjustment towards the medium-term budgetary objective to the amount of 0,75 % of GDP allowed for investments and the implementation of structural reforms, subject to the condition of resuming the adjustment path towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2017. **Achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,6 % or more of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2017.** Finalise the reform of the budgetary process in the course of 2016 and ensure that the spending review is an integral part of it. Ensure the timely implementation of the privatisation programme and use the windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. **Shift the tax burden from productive factors onto consumption and property.** Reduce the number and scope of tax expenditures and complete the reform of the cadastral system by mid-2017. **Take measures to improve tax compliance**, including through electronic invoicing and payments.	**Some progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): The assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact will be made in Spring. **Substantial progress** has been made in reforming the budgetary process. A comprehensive reform of the process was passed in 2016. Its full implementation is expected in the 2018 Budget Law, which would make the spending review a more integral part of the budgeting process. **Limited progress** has been made in implementing the privatisation programme and in using the windfall gains to reduce public debt. In 2016, Italy has underachieved its privatisation targets (at 0.1 % of GDP in 2016 versus the planned 0.5 %) and the lower interest rate expenditure was counterbalanced by increased primary expenditure. **Some progress** has been made in shifting the tax burden from productive factors onto consumption and property. Italy's 2017 Budget Law contains several measures affecting the tax wedge on labour, including lower tax rates on productivity premia agreed in decentralised bargaining, an exemption from the payment of social security contributions for certain new hires, and the reduction of the social security contributions rate for the self-employed. These measures compound more sizeable measures taken in 2014 and 2015 to reduce the labour tax wedge. **Limited progress** has been made in reducing the number and scope of tax expenditures and in completing the reform of the cadastral system. **Limited progress** has been made in improving tax	**1. Pursue a substantial fiscal effort in 2018, in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact**, taking into account the need to strengthen the ongoing recovery and to ensure the sustainability of Italy's public finances. Ensure timely implementation of the privatisation programme and use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt-to-GDP ratio. **Shift the tax burden from the factors of production onto taxes less detrimental to growth in a budget-neutral way** by taking decisive action to reduce the number and scope of tax expenditures, reforming the outdated cadastral system and reintroducing the first residence tax for high-income households. **Broaden the compulsory use of electronic invoicing and payments.**

		compliance. The 2017 Budget Law introduces a new tax on business income (IRI) to harmonise the tax system of small firms and corporations. It also introduces transparency provisions on the communication of invoices and VAT data, and a reform of tax administration, merging the tax-recovery agency (Equitalia) with the revenue agency. Sanctions and fines related to unpaid taxes in 2000-2015 are waived for taxpayers spontaneously regularising their tax position. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its [Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Italy]() (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *'In 2016, Italy's structural balance deteriorated by 0.7 % of GDP based on the Commission 2017 spring forecast, which points to some deviation from the required adjustment towards the MTO once taking into account the following allowances: (i) 0.5 % of GDP under the structural reform clause; (ii) 0.21 % of GDP under the investment clause; (iii) 0.06 % of GDP due to the additional expenditure for the exceptional inflow of refugees/migrants; and (iv) 0.06 % of GDP for security-related expenditure related to the terrorist threat.* ***The ex-post assessment thus suggests that Italy's adjustment path towards the MTO was broadly compliant with the requirements of the preventive arm of the SGP in 2016 and over 2015 and 2016 taken together.*** *The debt-to-GDP ratio increased in 2016 to 132.6 % of GDP, i.e. well above the Treaty reference value of 60 %, and, based on the Commission 2017 spring forecast, Italy was not compliant with the debt rule in that year and is not expected to comply in 2017 and 2018, either. Due to Italy's prima facie non-compliance with the debt rule in 2015, on 22 February 2017 the Commission issued a report under Article 126(3) TFEU, which concluded that "unless the additional structural measures, worth at least 0.2 % of GDP, that the government committed to adopt at the latest in April*	

		2017 are credibly enacted by that time in order to reduce the gap to broad compliance with the preventive arm in 2017 (and thus in 2016), the current analysis suggests that the debt criterion as defined in the Treaty and in Regulation (EC) No 1467/1997 should be considered as currently not complied with". In response to that request, the Italian government adopted a decree law with additional consolidation measures of a structural nature of around 0.2 % GDP. After incorporating those measures, the Commission 2017 spring forecast expects Italy's structural balance to deteriorate by 0.2 % of GDP in 2017, broadly in line with the 0.3 % of GDP worsening in the (recalculated) structural balance planned by the stability programme. That fiscal path is broadly compliant with the required adjustment path towards the MTO in 2017 and over 2016 and 2017 taken together, once the budgetary impact of the exceptional inflow of refugees and of the preventive investment plan for the protection of the national territory against seismic risks (preliminarily estimated at 0.34 % of GDP, overall) is deducted from the preventive arm requirement. ***As a result, the Commission assesses also that the conditionality to grant the requested deviation from the adjustment path towards the MTO in 2016 (i.e. the resumption of the adjustment in 2017) was fulfilled.*** *In 2018, in the light of its fiscal situation and notably of its debt level, Italy is expected to further adjust towards its medium-term budgetary objective of a balanced budget in structural terms. According to the commonly agreed adjustment matrix under the SGP, that adjustment translates into a requirement of a nominal rate of reduction of net primary government expenditure of at least 0.2% in 2018, corresponding to an annual structural adjustment of at least 0.6% of GDP. In 2018, the stability programme plans a structural improvement of 0.8 % of GDP, while the Commission expects Italy's structural balance to further deteriorate by 0.3 % of GDP, reaching a level of -2.2 % of GDP, i.e. below the country's minimum benchmark of -1.3 % of GDP. The difference is mainly due to the fact that the Commission 2017 spring*	

		forecast does not include a VAT hike (amounting to around EUR 16 billion or 0.9 % of GDP) legislated for 2018 as a "safeguard clause" to ensure the achievement of the budgetary targets, as the stability programme confirms the intention to repeal it without specifying the compensating measures. Taking into account the preventive arm requirement, ***an overall assessment based on the Commission 2017 spring forecast points to a risk of a significant deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO in 2018 and over 2017 and 2018 taken together.*** *These assessments are based on the matrix of preventive arm requirements agreed with the Council, which takes into account (i) the cyclical position of the economy, as assessed on the basis of output gap estimates using the commonly agreed methodology as well as the projected real GDP growth rate, and (ii) debt sustainability considerations. Given the current cyclical conditions and the uncertainty surrounding them, it is important that the fiscal stance strikes the right balance between both safeguarding the ongoing recovery and ensuring the sustainability of Italy's public finances. The Commission noted that, in carrying out its future assessments, it stands ready to use its margin of appreciation in cases where the impact of large fiscal adjustment on growth and employment is particularly significant. In that context, it will make use of any updated information regarding the projected position in the economic cycle of each Member State and work closely with the Council to that effect."* (pp. 24-25)	
	2. Implement the reform of the public administration by adopting and implementing all necessary legislative decrees, in particular those reforming publicly-owned enterprises, local public services and the management of human resources. **Step up the fight against corruption** including by revising the statute of limitations by the end of 2016. **Reduce the length of civil justice proceedings** by enforcing reforms and through effective case-management.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** has been made in implementing the public administration reform. Several implementing decrees have been adopted. However, on 25 November 2016, the Constitutional Court ruled that the procedure envisaged was unconstitutional for the decrees pointed out in the recommendations, notably those concerning human resource management, local public services and publicly-owned enterprises. Some of them had been already adopted (those regulating the management level in the health sector, disciplinary dismissals and state-	**2. Reduce the trial length in civil justice through effective case management** and rules ensuring procedural discipline. **Step up the fight against corruption**, in particular by revising the statute of limitations. **Complete reforms of public employment** and improve the efficiency of publicly-owned enterprises. **Promptly adopt and implement the pending law on competition** and address the remaining restrictions to competition.

		owned enterprises) and have therefore to be amended. For two decrees, (on local public services and public managers), the delegation had already expired. The decree on non-managerial staff was also concerned, but it can still be adopted under the enabling law with the correct procedure. **No progress** has been made in revising the statute of limitations. **Some progress** has been made in enforcing civil justice reform and improving case-management but the length of proceedings is not decreasing.	
	3. Accelerate the reduction in the stock of non-performing loans, including by further improving the framework for insolvency and debt collection. **Swiftly complete the implementation of ongoing corporate governance reforms in the banking sector.**	**Some progress:** **Limited progress** has been made in reducing non-performing loans (NPLs). In April 2016, a law was passed creating an NPL securitisation scheme supported by state guarantees (GACS), which became operational in August 2016 with the adoption of an implementing decree. Since April 2016, two private-sector backstop funds (Atlante I and II) have been set up to support the recapitalisation and the impaired asset disposal of vulnerable banks. Furthermore, the Bank of Italy has issued a new reporting template requiring banks to provide detailed data on their bad loans, collateral and ongoing recovery procedures. Although all these measures — including several reforms of insolvency and collateral enforcement rules — are in principle helpful in fostering the development of a secondary market for distressed assets in Italy, they have not yet resulted in significant short-term relief for the banking sector. In December 2016, the government approved the setup of a EUR 20 billion fund for the precautionary recapitalisation of and liquidity support for vulnerable banks, but it is not yet clear whether this will be a turning-point in the clean-up of the Italian banking sector. **Some progress** has been made in improving the framework for insolvency and debt collection. In June 2016, further changes to Italy's insolvency and collateral enforcement rules were made. Inter alia,	**3. Accelerate the reduction in the stock of non-performing loans** and step up incentives for balance-sheet clean-up and restructuring, in particular in the segment of banks under national supervision. **Adopt a comprehensive overhaul of the regulatory framework for insolvency and collateral enforcement.**

		provisions authorise private enforcement clauses in loan contracts allowing creditors to take ownership of collateral out-of-court in the event of a debtor's default (patto marciano), and enable entrepreneurs to pledge movable assets while continuing to use them (a kind of non-possessory lien). Furthermore, an electronic register for insolvency cases will be set up, and hearings can now be held electronically. The reforms complement those of 2015, but it may take some time before their results in terms of shorter proceedings and higher recovery values — essential for NPL market activity — materialise. In the meantime, a draft enabling law aiming to fundamentally overhaul the insolvency and enforcement framework is currently under parliamentary discussion. **Some progress** has been made in implementing corporate governance reform. With the adoption of a law in April 2016 and implementing provisions by the Bank of Italy in November 2016, the 18-month implementation period started for the self-reform of the segment of small mutual banks (banche di credito cooperativo (BCCs)). BCCs wishing to retain their cooperative status will have to join one of the cooperative banking groups that will be set up, and their relationship with the group's holding company will be determined by risk-based 'cohesion contracts'. The implementation of the 2015 reforms of large cooperative banks (banche popolari) and bank foundations has continued, although legal challenges and unfavourable market conditions have led to some delays.	
	4. Implement the reform of active labour market policies, in particular by strengthening the effectiveness of employment services. Facilitate the take-up of work for second earners. **Adopt and implement the national antipoverty strategy and review and rationalise social spending.**	**Some progress:** **Some progress** has been made in implementing the reform of ALMPs. The new Agency in charge of active labour market policies (ANPAL) is operational as of January 2017. A pilot outplacement voucher (assegno di ricollocazione) scheme was launched in November 2016 covering a sample of 30 000 beneficiaries. **Limited progress** has been made in facilitating the take-up of work by second earners. The 2017 Budget	**4.** With the involvement of social partners, **strengthen the collective bargaining framework** to allow collective agreements to better take into account local conditions. **Ensure effective active labour market policies.** Facilitate the take-up of work for second earners. **Rationalise social spending and improve its composition.**

		Law extends paternity leave from two to four days as of 2018. It also extends to 2017 and 2018 the possibility, first introduced in 2012, to exchange parental leave with babysitting vouchers and introduces a non-means-tested voucher for EUR 1 000 per year to be spent in public or private nurseries. **Some progress** has been made with regard to the national antipoverty strategy. The active inclusion measure (SIA), which provides economic and social care to disadvantaged households, was rolled out at national level. An enabling law aimed at establishing a single comprehensive scheme against poverty, replacing SIA and the unemployment assistance scheme (ASDI), has been approved by the Chamber of Deputies.	
	5. Swiftly adopt and implement the pending law on competition. Take further action to increase competition in regulated professions, the transport, health and retail sectors and the system of concessions.	**Limited progress:** **No progress** has been made with regard to the pending law on competition. The draft law was presented to Parliament in April 2015 and has not yet been approved by the Senate. **Limited progress** has been made in addressing remaining barriers to competition in regulated professions, the transport, health and retail sectors and the system of concessions. The code for public procurement and concessions was revised in 2016. No further measures were taken to remove remaining barriers to competition in the other sectors.	*See CSR 2 (implementation of the law on competition)*

CY	**Country Specific Recommendations 2016** **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4, 5**	**Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016** **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	**Country Specific Recommendations 2017** **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4**
	1. Following the correction of the excessive deficit, respect the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and in 2017. By the end of 2016, **adopt a binding mechanism containing the growth rate of the compensation of public employees.** By the end of 2016, **adopt the horizontal reform of the public administration and the law on the governance of state-owned entities**, and implement the reform of local governments. By the end of 2016, adopt the secondary legislation to complete the new budgetary framework.	**Limited progress** in addressing CSR 1 despite the completion of the budgetary framework. Indeed, limited progress has been made to adopt the draft bills regarding the wage bill while no progress was made concerning the public administration reform. No progress was made regarding the reform of state owned enterprises and local government, which related bills are still pending adoption by the House of Representatives. The assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact will be included in spring 2017, when final data for 2016 will be available There has been **limited progress** with regard to the binding mechanism containing the growth rate of the compensation of public employees. The mechanism has been introduced until 2018 in collective agreements with public sector unions. However, the legislative proposal to make this mechanism permanent has been rejected by the House of Representatives. There has been **no progress** with regard to the horizontal reform of the public administration. The draft laws have been rejected by the House of Representatives. There has been **no progress** with regard to the law on the governance of state-owned entities, and the reform of local governments. These reforms have not yet been adopted by the House of Representatives. There has been **substantial progress** as the legislation to complete the new budgetary framework has been adopted by the House of Representatives but implementation steps are still missing for it to be effective.	**1. Pursue its fiscal policy in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact**, which entails remaining at its medium-term budgetary objective in 2018. Use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. By the end of 2017, adopt key legislative reforms aiming to **improve efficiency in the public sector**, in particular on the functioning of public administration, governance of state-owned entities and local governments.

		In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its [Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Cyprus]() (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"In 2016, Cyprus achieved an improvement of the structural balance of 0.9% of GDP, which is well above the required adjustment towards the MTO.* *Based on the information provided in the stability programme,* ***in 2017, Cyprus is expected to be broadly compliant with the requirement to remain at the MTO*** *(a deviation of less than -0.1% of GDP). The growth rate of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures, is projected to exceed the applicable expenditure benchmark rate by 0.3% of GDP. Based on an overall assessment of the Comission 2017 spring forecast,* ***the adjustment path towards the MTO for Cyprus seems to be appropriate for 2017.*** *...* ***Based on an overall assessment of the Commission 2017 spring forecast, there is a risk of some deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO over the years 2017 and 2018 together****.* *From 2018 onwards, although the stability programme claims that the fiscal policy strategy is based on the respect of the MTO over the medium term, the structural balance is estimated to deteriorate continuously, well below the MTO of 0%.* ***Thus, the stability programme is not in line with the requirement of the preventive arm of the Pact, as the structural balance throughout the programme horizon does not present an adjustment path towards the MTO.*** *According to the stability programme, the recalculated change in the structural balance for 2017 and 2018 is higher than the required MLSA and, therefore, Cyprus is making sufficient progress towards compliance with the debt criterion in 2017 and 2018."* (pp. 18-19)	

	2. By June 2017, **eliminate impediments to the full implementation of the insolvency and foreclosure frameworks** and ensure adequate resources for the Insolvency Service. Ensure reliable and swift systems for the issuance of title deeds and the transfer of immovable property rights. **Increase the efficiency and capacity of the court system.** Reform the civil procedure law.	Cyprus has made **limited progress** with regard to CSR 2 on implementation of the insolvency and foreclosure frameworks and improving the title deeds issuance and transfer system. Some measures have been announced but remain to be adopted, while no full review of the insolvency and foreclosure frameworks, nor title deeds reform legislation have been tabled. There has been **some progress** in eliminating barriers to fully implementing the insolvency and foreclosure frameworks and in ensuring adequate resources for the Insolvency Service. Necessary amendments to the legislation on insolvency have been identified but not yet drafted, and no timetable has been released for their submission to the House of Representatives. Rules of Court have been adopted for personal insolvency procedures and are being prepared for corporate insolvency procedures. The capacity of the Insolvency Service has been increased. The foreclosure infrastructure has been developed. There has been **limited progress** on ensuring reliable and swift systems for issuing title deeds and transferring immovable property rights. Administrative and legislative measures have been taken to facilitate the issuance of title deeds, but no draft legislation for transfer of title deeds has been prepared due to the lack of understanding and agreement among stakeholders. There has been **limited progress** on increasing the efficiency and capacity of the court system and reforming the civil procedure law, as several reform initiatives have been announced but remain at a preliminary stage.	**2. Increase the efficiency of the judicial system** by modernising civil procedures, implementing appropriate information systems and increasing the specialisation of courts. Take additional measures to **eliminate impediments to the full implementation of the insolvency and foreclosure frameworks**, and to ensure reliable and swift systems for the issuance of title deeds and the transfer of immovable property rights.
	3. By the end of 2016, **take additional measures to ensure a decline in non-performing loans and accurate valuations of collateral for provisioning purposes.** Increase the range of information available for creditors and enhance the information currently provided to make the credit registry fully effective.	There has been **some progress** overall on CSR 3, regarding measures to ensure a decline in non-performing loans and increase the range of information available for creditors through the credit registry, which is now fully operational for loan origination purposes. There has been **some progress** on taking measures to ensure a decline in non-performing loans and accurate	**3. Accelerate the reduction of non-performing loans** by setting related quantitative and time-bound targets for banks and ensuring accurate valuation of collateral for provisioning purposes. Create the conditions for a functional secondary market for non-performing loans. **Integrate and strengthen the supervision of insurance companies and pension funds**.

		valuations of collateral for provisioning purposes. In particular, due to increased loan restructuring efforts incentivised by Government and Central Bank of Cyprus measures, the stock of NPLs has started to decline, but remains at a very high level. Some steps were also taken to create a secondary market for loans although no transaction has taken place. There has been **some progress** in increasing the range of information available for creditors through the credit registry, which is currently operational for loan origination purposes.	
	4. Remove impediments to investment, in particular by implementing the action plan for growth, pursuing the privatisation plan and strengthening the national regulatory authorities. Take measures to increase access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises.	Cyprus has made **some progress** towards removing impediments to investment as it started implementing the action plan for growth and made some minor progress with regard to privatisation, while limited progress was achieved concerning the facilitation of SME's access to finance. There has been **some progress** in implementing the action plan for growth. However, many workstreams have yet to enter their implementation phase. There has been **limited progress** in pursuing the privatisation plan. Draft bills aimed at launching the privatisation process of the Cyprus Telecommunications Authority (CyTA) were abandoned at the eve of the May 2016 general election, due to strong political opposition. Alternative proposals have not yet been formulated. Although minor privatisation projects still follow their course, budgetary funding for the privatisation unit has been cancelled. There has been **some progress** in strengthening the national regulatory authorities, notably through the capacity increase of the energy regulator CERA. There has been **limited progress** in increasing access to finance for SMEs, as most new initiatives from the authorities remain at a preliminary stage.	**4. Accelerate the implementation of the action plan for growth**, focusing in particular on fast-tracking strategic investments and improving access to finance, and, by the end of 2017, resume the implementation of the privatisation plan. Take decisive steps towards the ownership unbundling of the Electricity Authority of Cyprus and, in particular, proceed with the functional and accounting unbundling by the end of 2017.

	5. Enhance the capacity of the public employment services and their provision to the long-term unemployed; improve outreach to the non-registered unemployed. **Adopt legislation for a hospital reform** and advance with the planned implementation of **universal health care coverage**.	There has been **limited progress** overall in addressing CSR 5. **Limited progress** has been made concerning the enhancement of the capacity of the public employment services. This is because the recruitment of additional counsellors has been continuously delayed and the plans for improving the service remain vague. Some progress has been made to reach out to the non-registered unemployed, especially young people, but the outcome of these initiatives in terms of outcomes is not yet known. There has been **limited progress** in adopting legislation for a hospital reform and advancing with the planned implementation of universal healthcare coverage. Two bills for the creation of the National Health System and the autonomy of public hospitals were submitted to the House of Representatives, and are currently under discussion.	**5. Speed up reforms aimed at increasing the capacity of public employment services** and improving the quality of active labour market policies delivery. **Complete the reform of the education system** to improve its labour market relevance and performance, including teachers' evaluation. By the end of 2017, **adopt legislation for a hospital reform and universal healthcare coverage.**

LV	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. Ensure that the deviation from the adjustment path towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and 2017 is limited to the allowance linked to the systemic pension reform and the major structural reform in the healthcare sector. **Reduce the tax wedge for low-income earners** by exploiting a growth-friendly tax shift towards environmental and property taxes and improving tax compliance.	**Limited progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): The compliance assessment with the Stability and Growth Pact will be included in spring when final data for 2016 will be available. **Limited progress** has been made in shifting the tax burden away from low-wage earners. Adopted measures have a limited effect. The tax wedge on low-wage earners remains high, while there is a scope to shift taxation to consumption, property and capital. **Some progress** has been made in improving tax compliance. A number of small measures have been introduced. The increased tax revenue relative to the tax base demonstrates a better collection. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Latvia (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"**In 2016**, Latvia reached a balanced budgetary position, over-achieving the MTO. The increase in government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue and one-off measures, exceeded the applicable expenditure benchmark rate by 0.2% of GDP.* ***Following an overall assessment the requirements of the preventive arm are assessed to be met.*** ***In 2017****, the headline government balance is planned to deteriorate to a deficit of 0.8% of GDP. The structural balance requirement is met, but the expenditure benchmark is surpassed by 0.1% of GDP.* ***Based on an overall assessment, Latvia is projected to meet the requirements of the preventive arm.***	**1. Pursue its fiscal policy in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact**, which entails achieving its medium-term budgetary objective in 2018, taking into account the allowances linked to the implementation of the systemic pension reform and of the structural reforms for which a temporary deviation is granted. **Reduce taxation for low-income earners** by shifting it to other sources that are less detrimental to growth and by improving tax compliance.

		***In 2018**, Latvia plans the government deficit to increase to 1.6% of GDP. This implies a deviation of 0.7% of GDP from the required adjustment path towards the MTO in 2018. The significant deviation from the expenditure benchmark is also recorded in 2018. **Based on the Commission 2017 spring forecast, and following an overall assessment, there is a risk of significant deviation in 2018.**"* (p. 20)	
	2. Improve the adequacy of social assistance benefits and step up measures supporting recipients in finding and retaining work, including through increased coverage of activation measures. Speed up the curricula reform in **vocational education**, establish — with the involvement of social partners — a regulatory framework for work-based learning and increase their offer. **Improve the accessibility, quality and cost-effectiveness of the healthcare system.**	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** has been made in improving adequacy of social assistance benefits. The key reform of the minimum income level was not implemented as planned in 2017 and future plans are uncertain. The family state benefit has been excluded from the means test to qualify for social assistance with a limited improvement in benefit adequacy. **Some progress** has been made in supporting social assistance recipients in finding and retaining work. The EU financed programmes have picked up in 2016 after a dip in 2015. Measures for vulnerable groups are expanded, but regional mobility support is not fully utilised. To encourage taking up employment, income up to the minimum wage is excluded from the means test for the social assistance for three months from start of employment. **Some progress** has been made in improving vocational education. The regulatory framework for work-based learning and on development of VET programmes is established. Limited progress has been made on curricula reform in 2016, which is to be finalised in 2021. **Limited progress** has been made. The current structure of the system, with high out-of-pocket and informal payments, still leaves much of the population with unmet healthcare needs. There is some increase in public funding in 2017, but no medium-term financing	**2. Improve the adequacy of the social safety net and up-skill the labour force** by speeding up the curricula reform in vocational education. **Increase the cost-effectiveness of and access to healthcare**, including by reducing out-of-pocket payments and long waiting times.

		plans have been adopted yet. The implementation of e-health services is delayed.	
	3. Pursue the consolidation of research institutions and provide incentives for private investment in innovation. Strengthen the conflict of interest prevention regime and **set up a common legal framework for all public employees**. Increase the accountability and public oversight of insolvency administrators.	**Some progress:** **Some progress** has been made in the consolidation of research institutions and in private innovation incentives. The consolidation of research institutions is ongoing. Business investment in R&D has slightly declined and remains low in international comparison. **Limited progress** has been made in strengthening the conflict of interest prevention regime. The legislative framework has been further developed by granting more independence of the director of the corruption prevention office and by an expert-based selection process of the director, but there is political reluctance to apply this framework. The draft Public Service Law has not progressed and will be reviewed in light of the upcoming public service reform. **Some progress** has been made in increasing the accountability and public oversight of insolvency administrators. Legal framework and tools for supervision of insolvency administrators have been put in place. The capacity of the state police is gradually increased for preventing criminal offences related to insolvency.	**3. Increase efficiency and accountability in the public sector**, in particular by simplifying administrative procedures and strengthening the conflict-of-interest prevention regime, including for insolvency administrators.

LT	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. Ensure that the deviation from the medium-term budgetary objective is limited to the allowance linked to the systemic pension reform in 2016 and in 2017. **Reduce the tax burden on low-income earners** by shifting the tax burden to other sources less detrimental to growth and **improve tax compliance**, in particular in the area of VAT.	**Some progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): **Substantial progress** has been made in reducing the tax burden on low-wage earners. Lithuania has substantially increased the non-taxable allowance for the low wage earners. Lithuania raised the non-taxable allowance and the allowance for dependent children substantially as from 2017. As a result, the tax wedge to low earners is lowered by up to 2.5 pp for households without children and by up to 3.5 pp to households with children. However, these tax measures fail to further lower the tax wedge to some of the most vulnerable households, e.g. single earners with two children or more. **Some progress** in shifting the tax burden to other sources. Measures to compensate for the revenue loss due to reduced tax burden on labour cover about a half of those losses. The diversity of new tax sources; however, is limited however as the vast majority of additional revenue comes from increase in excise taxes on cigarettes and alcohol. **Some progress** in improving tax compliance. Lithuania has adopted a number of measures that are expected to improve its analytical and tax collection ability substantially. The actual impact on tax collection of these efforts; however is yet to be seen. During 2016 Lithuania introduced an electronic invoicing system and an electronic waybill system.	**1. Pursue its fiscal policy in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact,** which entails remaining at its medium term budgetary objective in 2018, taking into account the allowances linked to the implementation of the systemic pension reform and of the structural reforms for which a temporary deviation is granted. **Improve tax compliance and broaden the tax base** to sources that are less detrimental to growth. Take steps to **address the medium-term fiscal sustainability challenge related to pensions.**

		In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its [Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Lithuania] (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"In 2016, Lithuania maintained a structural balance above its MTO in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact.* *Lithuania plans to remain above the MTO over the period 2017-2020. Based on the Commission 2017 spring forecast, the structural balance is projected to respect the MTO in 2017-2018. Therefore, Lithuania is projected to meet the requirements under the preventive arm of the SGP in both 2017 and in 2018."* (p. 19)	
	2. Strengthen investment in human capital and address skills shortages, by improving the labour market relevance of education, raising the quality of teaching and adult learning. Reinforce the coverage and effectiveness of active labour market policies. Strengthen the role of social dialogue mechanisms. **Improve the performance of the healthcare system** by strengthening outpatient care, disease prevention and health promotion. **Improve the coverage and adequacy of unemployment benefits and social assistance.**	**Some progress:** **Limited progress** has been made in strengthening the investment in human capital. Overall, Lithuania has adopted some measures that partly address the CSR, but a fair amount of work is still needed to fully address the CSR. Lithuania continues implementing measures to improve the attractiveness of vocational education and training, and has taken steps to expand availability of work-based learning. However, there is limited progress on improving the quality of teaching, and especially the working conditions and professional development of teachers. Also, there is a lack of improvement in the uptake of adult learning. **Some progress** has been made in reinforcing the coverage and effectiveness of active labour market policies. Overall, LT has adopted some measures that partly address the CSR, but a fair amount of work is still needed to fully address the CSR.	**2. Address skills** shortages through effective active labour market policy measures and adult learning and improve educational outcomes by rewarding quality in teaching and in higher education. **Improve the performance of the healthcare system** by strengthening outpatient care, disease prevention and affordability. **Improve the adequacy of the social safety net.**

		Lithuanian Public Employment Service implemented specific activation projects targeting the low-skilled, long-term unemployed, older and disabled persons. Lithuania has adopted the new Law on Employment, which is planned to come into force in July 2017. **Some progress** in strengthening the role of social dialogue mechanisms. LT has adopted the legislative package on the "new social model", among them a new labour code. It includes new provisions for collective bargaining, industrial action, and the participation in the Tripartite Council, but the implementation is postponed to 1 July 2017. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour has adopted the Action Plan for Strengthening of Social Dialogue in Lithuania for 2016-2020. It will support the promotion of social dialogue between employers and employees' representatives (at national and local levels), and include other measures, including capacity building for the social partners, in order to foster the social dialogue. However, some social partners indicated that they were not fully involved in designing the Action Plan, which may not cover their real needs. **Some progress** has been made in improving the performance of healthcare system. Lithuania has advanced on the fourth stage of the health system reform, particularly on shifting patients from inpatient to outpatient settings. A State Health Promotion Fund was established in 2016 funded by resources from alcohol excise duties and some projects are being supported by the fund; other small projects are being implemented. Other actions that could support the improvement of the performance of the health system, as the Action Plan for reducing health inequalities 2014-2023 are still to be effectively launched.	

		Regarding corruption on healthcare the authorities have concrete plans that seem to be adequate, but, as in all other areas, the success of implementation will be crucial. **<u>Some progress</u>** has been made in improving the coverage and adequacy of unemployment benefits. There was no progress in the adequacy of social assistance but a slight one as regards coverage. LT has adopted measures that address the CSR, but a fair amount of work is still needed to fully address the CSR as only a few of the adopted measures have been implemented, and their effect is not tangible yet. LT has adopted the new labour code and the "social model", but the implementation is postponed to 1 July 2017. The initial analysis shows that while coverage of the unemployment insurance benefits may increase, the increase in adequacy could be only marginal. The effect of the new legislation "on the ground" is not clear at the moment. Regarding the social benefits, the amendments indeed increase the coverage, and for some beneficiary groups, the adequacy might be slightly improved. However, overall the adequacy of the social benefits remains low, and no major changes have been implemented since 2008.	
	3. Take measures to **strengthen productivity and improve the adoption and absorption of new technology across the economy.** Improve the coordination of innovation policies and **encourage private investment,** inter alia, by developing alternative means of financing.	**Limited progress:** **<u>Limited progress</u>** has been made in strengthening the productivity. Although, implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds and the Lithuanian Smart Specialisation Framework are expected to support this process in the coming years, no additional measures to address the challenge have been adopted. **<u>Limited progress</u>** has been made to improve coordination of innovation policies. President's Office called for reforms in the "Lithuanian Science and Innovation Policy Reform Guidelines",	**3.** Take measures to **strengthen productivity** by improving the efficiency of public investment and strengthening its linkage with the country's strategic objectives.

		these were adopted by the Parliament and are expected to trigger the reform process in 2017. **Some progress** has been made in developing alternative means of financing. Lithuania has helped establish and fund a number of venture capital and seed capital funds. Also, the government has recently passed a law on crowd-investing.	

LU	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: -** **MIP: -**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: -** **MIP: -**
	1. Ensure the long-term sustainability of public pensions by increasing the effective retirement age, by limiting early retirement and increasing incentives to work longer, and by aligning the statutory retirement age to changes in life expectancy.	**Limited progress:** Progress has [been] limited for all subparts of the CSR and no progress has been made in relation to the recommendation to align the statutory retirement age to changes in life expectancy. **Limited progress** in ensuring the sustainability of the public finances. A working group on pensions was set up in April 2016 with the task of carrying out a sustainability analysis of the pension system. In early December 2016 a report was published. It contains a detailed analysis of the situation of the national pension system. It shows inter alia that based on current scenario (the Ageing Working Group) revenues from contributions will remain higher than pension expenditure up to 2022 (the last year of the current contribution period). Simulations were also done with alternative scenarios. These simulations show that under less favourable economic and demographic assumptions, the size of the pension challenge could be larger than currently estimated. **Limited progress** in increasing the effective retirement age. A law on reclassification of workers with working disabilities has been adopted in 2015 and is being implemented since the beginning of 2016. It aims to keep workers with disabilities in the labour market. It is too early to assess its impact however. **Limited progress** on reforms regarding early retirement. A draft law to modify existing legislation on early retirement is still to be discussed in the Parliament. **Limited progress** on increasing incentives to work longer. A legislative initiative, referred to as \`Age Pact´, which includes a whole package of measures to keep workers longer in employment, is tabled in the Parliament, but it has not been adopted yet.	**2. Ensure the long-term sustainability of the pension system,** limit early retirement and increase the employment rate of older people.

		No progress in aligning the statutory retirement age to changes in life expectancy. There are no measures to link the effective retirement age to changes in life expectancy.	
	2. Remove barriers to investment and innovation that limit economic development in the business services sector. Address bottlenecks that hamper housing investment.	**Limited progress:** Progress has been limited in removing barriers to investment, while some progress has been made in addressing bottlenecks to housing investment. **Limited progress** in removing barriers to investment and innovation that limit economic development in the business services sector. By decision of the 'Conseil de Gouvernement' of 2 September 2016, the fixed tariffs in public contracts for the services provided by architects and engineers have been abolished. **Some progress** in addressing bottlenecks that hamper housing investment. Numerous measures have been adopted or are planned. The measures are: i) a reform of local government financing has been adopted in December 2016. It links, at least partially, the financing of the municipalities to initiatives favouring housing investment; ii) a draft 'Omnibus' law (n. 6704) has been approved at beginning of 2017. Among others, it aims at streamlining the building permits procedure; iii) the tax reform includes measures intended to provide incentives to increase the supply of houses and construction land (temporary tax exemption for 50 % of the capital gain realised on the sale of constructible land); and iv) an initiative to produce a new sectoral housing plan. Nevertheless, the challenge ahead for the Luxembourg authorities remains sizeable.	**1. Strengthen the diversification of the economy,** including by removing barriers to investment and innovation. **Remove regulatory restrictions in the business services sector.**

HU	**Country Specific Recommendations 2016** **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**	**Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016** **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	**Country Specific Recommendations 2017** **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. In view of the high risk of a significant deviation, **achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,3 % of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and of 0,6 % of GDP in 2017,** unless the medium-term budgetary objective is respected with a lower effort, by taking the necessary structural measures.	In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Convergence Programme for Hungary (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"In 2016, based on the Commission 2017 spring forecast, Hungary is considered to be at the MTO, given that its structural balance is within a margin of ¼ pps. of GDP from its MTO. In 2016, starting from an initial position above the MTO, Hungary's structural balance is estimated to have deteriorated by 0.3% of GDP, which points to some deviation from the required adjustment. However, a significant deviation was observed for the expenditure benchmark pillar in 2016. Taking into account the factors affecting the estimated deviations for the two pillars,* ***the overall assessment suggests some deviation from the required adjustment path towards the MTO in 2016. At the same time, Hungary met the requirement of the debt reduction benchmark in 2016.*** *Both on the basis of the debt-reduction path of the convergence programme and the Commission 2017 spring forecast,* ***Hungary's debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to be below the debt reduction benchmark in 2017 and 2018 implying compliance with the debt rule.*** *The convergence programme assumes that the revised MTO will be reached by 2020. Based on the programme data recalculated by the Commission, however, the structural balance would not reach the MTO by the end of the programme period. According to the Commission 2017 spring forecast, the structural balance is expected to deteriorate considerably below the MTO in 2017 and 2018.* ***Overall, the adjustment path planned in the programme is not in line with the requirement of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact with a risk of a significant deviation in 2017 and 2018.*** *The structural balance and net expenditure growth based on*	**1. Pursue a substantial fiscal effort in 2018 in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact,** taking into account the need to strengthen the ongoing recovery and to ensure the sustainability of Hungary's public finances.

		the Commission 2017 spring forecast also point to a risk of a significant deviation from the required adjustment path towards the MTO in 2017 and 2018." (p. 23)	
	2. Further reduce sector-specific taxes and reduce the tax wedge for low-income earners. Strengthen transparency and competition in public procurement through e-procurement, increased publication of tenders and further improvement of the anti-corruption framework. **Improve the regulatory environment in the services sector and in the retail sector** by addressing restrictive regulations and ensuring predictability.	**Limited progress:** Hungary has made **limited progress** in addressing the first subpart of CSR 2 as regards the further reduction of sectorial taxes. By means of measures adopted (published) on 15.6.2016 and implemented with effect from 1.1.2017, the bank levy on the taxable base in excess of HUF 50 billion is reduced from 0.24% to 0.21% of the balance sheet total. This reflects a downward trend as the bank levy was first reduced as of 1.1.2016 from 0.53% to 0.24%. At the same time, some distortive sectorial taxes remain, in particular in the telecommunications sector (utilities tax, telecommunications tax,) and the energy sector (Robin Hood tax, utilities tax). Hungary has made **some progress** in addressing the second subpart of CSR 2 as regards the reduction of the tax wedge for low-income earners. By means of measures announced in November 2016 and implemented with effect from 1.1.2017, the employers' social security contributions are cut from 27% to 22% and are set to be further reduced to 20% from 2018. This general measure reduces the tax wedge for all employees. Personal income tax allowance for families with two children is further increased. The tax wedge of low-income earners however remains higher than the EU average and in regional peers. As regards anti-corruption, Hungary has made **limited progress**. New measures taken streamline the internal control and the integrity management functions. The real impact of the national anti-corruption programme's approach on preventing and curbing down corruption has not been evaluated yet. No legal measures have been taken to improve the protection of whistle-blowers or to reduce favouritism among government officials. Prosecution of high-level corruption remains limited and affects deterrence. Limited progress can be seen as regards public procurement. Revised versions of the e-procurement strategy were sent in the second half of	**2. Complete the reduction of the tax wedge for low-income earners and simplify the tax structure,** in particular by reducing the most distortive sector-specific taxes. **Strengthen transparency and competition in public procurement,** by implementing a comprehensive and efficient e-procurement system, and strengthen the anti-corruption framework. **Strengthen regulatory predictability, transparency and competition** in particular in the services sector, notably in retail.

		2016. Although the document is a solid basis for future developments. Hungary also committed to develop an e-procurement system, and test it through a pilot project. So far, no pilot project has been launched, nor did Hungary draw up a concrete concept of what it intends to do in this regard. Regarding service sector in the field of energy, the concentration of household gas customers into one gas supplier and regulated end-user prices eliminates retail competition and does not contribute to attract investments in the energy utility sector. **No progress** has been made on improving the regulatory environment in the services sector and in the retail sector.	
	3. Facilitate the transition from the public works scheme to the primary labour market and reinforce other active labour market policies. Improve the adequacy and coverage of social assistance and unemployment benefits. Take measures to **improve educational outcomes** and to **increase the participation of disadvantaged groups**, in particular Roma, in inclusive mainstream education.	**Limited progress:** Hungary has made **some progress** in reinforcing active labour market policies other than the public work scheme. Following legislative changes PWS participants are now entitled to a placement benefit if they find employment in the primary labour market. The training component of the PWS has been enhanced. As of January 2017 further activation measures were introduced. From 2016, the ESF co-financed "Training of Low-skilled and Public Workers'" programme supports training for among others public workers. PWS participants also receive training supported by funds from the Ministry of Interior. During the first ten months of 2016 almost 20 thousand public workers were involved in trainings. ESF (and YEI) supported ALMP programmes started to roll out in 2015 and 2016. The two major programmes are the "Path to the labour market" and the Youth Guarantee. Until the end of October 2016, more than 39,000 people have been involved in the first programme, and more than 41,000 young people in the YG. The national expenditure for active labour market policies is planned to be gradually increased, whereas expenditures of the public work schemes will be decreased in the upcoming years. In 2017 the budgetary allocation for public works is set to stabilize while spending on other ALMPs is set to increase.	**3. Better target the public works scheme** to those furthest away from the labour market and provide effective support to jobseekers in order to facilitate transitions to the labour market, including by reinforcing active labour market policies. Take measures to **improve education outcomes and to increase the participation of disadvantaged groups,** in particular Roma, in inclusive mainstream education. **Improve the adequacy and coverage of social assistance and the duration of unemployment benefits.**

		Limited progress was observed with regards to the improving the adequacy and coverage of social assistance and unemployment benefits. The duration of unemployment benefits is still the lowest in the EU at 3 months. The budget for 2017 foresees an increase (by about 5%) of the nominal value of some benefits: elderly support, care assistance, child support benefit. There has been a 12% increase regarding the so called "home-acquisition" support provided for those young people who leave institutional care. The level of the other entitlements is not planned to change in 2017. Hungary made **limited progress** in improving educational outcomes and increasing participation of disadvantaged groups in inclusive mainstream education. Recent PISA results show a deterioration of educational outcomes. The distribution of disadvantaged pupils between schools is uneven and the corresponding corrective mechanisms are insufficient. National and European surveys indicate that increasing shares of Roma children attend Roma-majority schools and classes. Legislative changes aiming at addressing this have been tabled, but remain to be adopted and implemented.	

MT	[Country Specific Recommendations 2016](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**	[Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016](#) **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	[Country Specific Recommendations 2017](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. In view of the high risk of a significant deviation, **achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,6 % of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and in 2017,** by taking the necessary structural measures. Step up measures to **ensure the long-term sustainability of public finances.**	**Limited progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact). Malta has made **limited progress** in improving the sustainability of public finances. The Draft Budgetary Plan reports on the initiatives to address the fiscal structural country specific recommendations, although no new elements are reported compared to the situation in spring. In particular, in the area of pension reform, some measures were introduced already with the 2016 budget, targeted at addressing sustainability and adequacy. A full assessment of the budgetary impact is still missing, but initial assessments show that measures to achieve sustainability are not yet as ambitious as to respond to the long term challenges. In addition, the 2017 budget introduced a number of new measures targeted at increasing pension income. Policy action to improve the sustainability of the healthcare system is ongoing. However, it is uncertain whether these measures are sufficient to cope with the challenge of long-term sustainability. An estimate of their potential impact to be incorporated into the long-term budgetary projections is still missing. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its [Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Malta](#) (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"In 2016, Malta recorded headline and structural budget surpluses,* ***in line with the provisions of the Stability and Growth Pact.*** *According to both the information provided in the stability programme and the Commission 2017 spring forecast* ***Malta will continue to remain above its medium-term objective in 2017 and 2018.*** *In addition,*	**1. Expand the scope of the ongoing spending reviews** to the broader public sector and **introduce performance-based public spending.**

		the debt-to-GDP ratio decreased below 60% in 2016 and, according to the stability programme and the Commission 2017 spring forecast, and it is projected to decline further. ***Therefore, Malta is projected to meet the requirements under the preventive arm of the SGP in both 2017 and in 2018.****"* (p. 18)	
	2. Take measures to strengthen labour supply, in particular through increased participation of low-skilled persons in lifelong learning.	**Some progress:** Malta has made **<u>some progress</u>** in strengthening labour supply by improving access and participation in lifelong learning, with a focus on the low-skilled. The National Lifelong Learning Strategy is under implementation, with relevant upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Literacy, numeracy and IT courses are offered in the community, including through cooperation with Local Councils and LEAP centres. ( ) Free of charge revision classes are provided to those who failed or were absent for their examination. Besides the Alternative Learning Programme, two other programmes are offered to students who at the end of compulsory education acquire no or minimum qualifications: 'Youth Inc.' and 'GEM16+'. Malta is working to increase access to second chance education for those with no formal secondary education certificate, through the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). In 2016 a programme called Skills Kits which offers more flexible and customised pathways was launched. Counselling and orientation is provided for students in education through VET and higher education. In addition services are available to unemployed within Public Employment Services. However, less attention is given to those already in employment.	
			2. Ensure the effective national supervision of internationally oriented business by financial institutions licensed in Malta by strengthening cooperation with the host supervisors in the countries where they operate.

NL	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 3**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: -** **MIP: CSR 1, 2**
	1. Limit the deviation from the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,6 % of GDP in 2017. Prioritise public expenditure towards supporting more investment in research and development.	**No progress** in addressing the fiscal-structural part of CSR 1 (This overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact) **No progress** has been made in prioritising public expenditure towards supporting more investment in research and development. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for the Netherlands (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"**In 2016, the Netherlands recorded headline and structural budget surpluses, in full compliance with the provisions of the Stability and Growth Pact. The Netherlands complied with the transitional debt benchmark in 2016.*** *According to the stability programme, **the Netherlands plans to remain above the MTO in 2017 and 2018, and the debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to fall below the 60% reference value as of 2017.** This is in line with the Commission 2017 spring forecast.* *The budgetary position indicates available fiscal space to support domestic demand, including investment in research and development, in full compliance with the provisions of the Stability and Growth Pact. Furthermore, this would also be in line with the Council recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area of 21 March 2017, which invited Member States that have outperformed their medium-term objectives to continue to prioritise investments to boost potential growth while preserving the long-term sustainability of public finances."* (p. 15)	**1.** While respecting the medium-term objective, **use fiscal and structural policies to support potential growth and domestic demand,** including investment in research and development. **Take measures to reduce the remaining distortions in the housing market and the debt bias for households,** in particular by decreasing mortgage interest tax deductibility.

	2. Tackle remaining barriers to hiring staff on permanent contracts and facilitate the transition from temporary to permanent contracts. Address the high increase in self-employed without employees, including by reducing tax distortions favouring self-employment, without compromising entrepreneurship, and by promoting access of the self- employed to affordable social protection.	**Limited progress:** **No (further) progress** has been made in tackling remaining barriers to hiring staff or in facilitating transition from temporary to permanent contracts. **No progress** has been made in reducing tax distortions favouring self-employment or increasing the social protection coverage of self-employed. **Limited progress** has been made in addressing the increase in using self-employed without employees. With the Employment Relationships Deregulation Act (Wet DBA) the Netherlands have implemented a mechanism that reduces the incentives for employers to replace employees by bogus self-employed. But the enforcement of this law has recently been postponed until at least the beginning of 2018. In the Perspectives Memorandum the government developed a vision for a possible reform of the pension system that may also include the coverage of self-employed under the second pillar of the pension system on a voluntary basis.	**2. Tackle remaining barriers to hiring staff on permanent contracts.** Address the high increase in the self-employed without employees, including by reducing tax distortions favouring self-employment, without compromising entrepreneurship, and by promoting access of the self-employed to affordable social protection. Based on the broad preparatory process already launched, **make the second pillar of the pension system more transparent, inter-generationally fairer and more resilient to shocks.** Create conditions to promote higher real wage growth, respecting the role of the social partners.
	3. Take measures to make the second pillar of the pension system more transparent, inter-generationally fairer and more resilient to shocks. Take measures to reduce the remaining distortions in the housing market and the debt bias for households, in particular by **decreasing mortgage interest tax deductibility.**	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress:** With the Perspectives Memorandum, the government announced its ambition to reform the second pillar of the pensions system, but the development and the implementation of a reform is left to the next government. This points to limited progress. **No progress** has been made regarding the distortions in the housing market, since no additional reforms have been implemented and the mortgage interest tax deductibility has not been reduced further.	*See CSR 1 (distortions in the housing market, decreasing mortgage interest tax deductibility)* *See CSR 2 (the second pillar of the pension system)*

AT	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. Ensure that the deviation from the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and in 2017 is limited to the allowance linked to the budgetary impact of the exceptional inflow of refugees in 2015, and to that effect achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,3 % of GDP in 2017 unless the medium-term budgetary objective is respected with a lower effort. **Ensure the sustainability of the healthcare system, and of the pension system** by linking the statutory pension age to life expectancy. **Simplify, rationalise and streamline fiscal relations and responsibilities across the various layers of government.**	**Some progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): The compliance assessment with the Stability and Growth Pact will be included in Spring when final data for 2016 will be available. **Some progress** can be reported in ensuring the sustainability of the healthcare system. The 2017 financial equalisation law has set more stringent expenditure targets. The provision of outpatient care has been strengthened by the creation of a new legal framework for multi-disciplinary primary care centres with an earmarked budget. Incentives for hospitals to treat outpatient cases as inpatient cases have been reduced. **Limited progress** in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the pension system, as financial incentives for working beyond the statutory retirement age are likely to marginally increase the effective retirement age. **No progress** has been made in addressing CSR 1 on increasing the sustainability of the pension system by linking the statutory retirement age to life expectancy. The Austrian government has no intention to take measures establishing a link between the statutory retirement age and life expectancy. **Some progress** in simplifying, rationalising and streamlining fiscal relations and responsibilities across the various layers of government. The 2017 financial equalisation law implemented a few steps to increase the tax autonomy of sub-national governments, even if the misalignment between revenue-raising powers and spending responsibilities remains high. The system of	**1. Pursue its fiscal policy in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact,** which entails achieving its medium-term budgetary objective in 2018, taking into account the allowance linked to unusual events. **Ensure the sustainability of the healthcare system and of the pension system. Rationalise and streamline competencies across the various layers of government and align their financing and spending responsibilities.**

		inter-government transfers has been slightly simplified, while the revenue-sharing system has been made more task-orientation. The efficiency and adaptability of the fiscal framework has been improved with the introduction of the legal basis for regular spending reviews and a system of benchmarks. The different government subsectors have committed to a reform of their respective competencies. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Austria (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"In 2016, Austria made sufficient progress towards compliance with the debt criterion as defined by the minimum linear structural adjustment (MLSA). The structural balance deteriorated by 0.8 pps of GDP to -1% of GDP. At the same time, the growth rate of government expenditure in 2016, net of discretionary revenue measures and one-offs, was above the applicable expenditure benchmark rate by -0.4% of GDP.* ***On the basis of an overall assessment, this points to a risk of some deviation from the adjustment path towards the MTO in 2016.*** *Based on the stability programme,* ***Austria is expected to meet the debt reduction benchmark both in 2017 and 2018, the first two years of the application of the debt benchmark after the transition period.*** *The Commission 2017 spring forecast confirms compliance both in 2017 and 2018.* *Austria expects in the stability programme the (recalculated) structural balance to improve by 0.2 pps of GDP to -0.8% of GDP in 2017.* ***Based on an overall assessment, this path is at risk of some deviation from the required adjustment path towards the MTO in 2016 and 2017 taken together.*** *In 2018, the (recalculated) structural balance is expected to remain stable, at 0.8% of GDP, while the growth rate of government expenditure in 2016, net of discretionary revenue measures and one-offs, is expected to be above the applicable expenditure*	

		benchmark rate by -0.5% of GDP. On the basis of an overall assessment, this causes a risk of significant deviation from the required adjustment path towards the MTO. Nevertheless, in case the current estimate of the budgetary impact in 2017 of the additional security measures is considered for 2017 and subsequently carried forward as an allowed distance from the MTO, ***the overall assessment would point to a risk of some deviation in 2018.*** *According to the Commission 2017 spring forecast,* ***there is a risk of some deviation from the adjustment path towards the MTO in 2017 and 2018****.''* (p. 19)	
	2. Improve the labour market participation of women. Take steps to improve the educational achievements of disadvantaged young people, in particular those from a migrant background.	**Some progress:** **Some progress** can be reported regarding increasing childcare infrastructure and services. The right for part-time workers of a business to receive information about full-time job offers has been implemented. Awareness-raising of the advantages and disadvantages of full-time and part-time employment has been enforced. Overall the increasing labour market participation of women is mainly based on part-time employment. No new measures have been taken to substantially increase full-time employment of women. **Some progress** in addressing the need to improve the educational achievements of disadvantaged young people, in particular those from a migrant background. This progress takes the form of the step-by-step implementation of the education reform agreed in September 2015 which allocates EUR 750 million for expanding the number of all-day schools over the next 6 years. Reform measures in early childhood education and care and primary schools have already been implemented. Measures to increase schools' autonomy and improve task distribution between the federal level and the regions are planned for adoption before April 2017. However, these measures have not yet had an impact on education outcomes.	**2. Improve labour market outcomes for women** through, inter alia, the provision of full-time care services. **Improve the educational achievements of disadvantaged young people,** in particular those from a migrant background. **Foster investment in the services sector by reducing administrative and regulatory barriers,** easing market entry and facilitating company growth.

	3. Reduce, in the area of services, administrative and regulatory barriers for investments, such as restrictive authorisation requirements and restrictions on legal form and shareholding, and impediments to setting up interdisciplinary companies.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress:** Austria presented a draft revision of the trade licence act (Gewerbeordnung) in November 2016. This revision removes access barriers for 19 trades (Teilgewerbe), abolishes the initial registration fee and increases the scope for performing side activities without an additional licence (15-30 % instead of currently around 10 %). The high number of regulated trades (reglementierte Gewerbe) remains unchanged, however, and the law still requires separate licences for each of the 459 free trades (freie Gewerbe). Austria is also simplifying the procedure for authorising installations on business premises (Betriebsanlagen). Low-risk installations will benefit from a simplified procedure, deadlines for granting authorisations will be shortened, a one-stop shop for different types of permits will be created and publication requirements will be reduced. As regards other restrictions on access to and exercise of the regulated professions, only relatively minor changes have been implemented. **No progress:** Efforts which were started in November 2015 to remove restrictions on interdisciplinary companies have subsequently been discontinued.	*See CSR 2 (reduction of administrative and regulatory barriers for investment in the services sector)*

PL	[Country Specific Recommendations 2016](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**	[Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016](#) **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	[Country Specific Recommendations 2017](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. Achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,5 % of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and in 2017. Strengthen the fiscal framework, including by establishing an independent fiscal council. Improve tax collection by ensuring better VAT compliance, and limit the extensive use of reduced VAT rates.	**Limited progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): The compliance assessment with the Stability and Growth Pact will be included in spring when final data for 2016 will be available. **No progress** has been made on establishing a fiscal council. The authorities do not envisage implementing one. **Some progress** was made in improving tax collection. Several measures aimed at fighting tax fraud in the fuel sector entered into force in 2016. They are followed by a large amendment of the VAT law that entered into force in 2017. A new National Revenue Administration will become operational in March 2017. In contrast, no progress was made on limiting the extensive use of reduced VAT rates. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Convergence Programme for Poland (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"**In 2016**, the general government deficit was 2.4% of GDP, while the structural deficit reached 2.2% of GDP. The structural balance improved by 0.1% of GDP, which is 0.4% of GDP below the recommended adjustment towards the MTO. The growth rate of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures, met the applicable expenditure benchmark rate. **Following an overall assessment, this points to some deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO**.*	**1. Pursue a substantial fiscal effort in 2018, in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact,** taking into account the need to strengthen the ongoing recovery and to ensure the sustainability of Poland's public finances. **Take steps to improve the efficiency of public spending and limit the use of reduced VAT rates.**

		At the end of 2016, the general government debt amounted to 54.4% of GDP. It is expected to remain below the Treaty reference value of 60% of GDP over the programme horizon. *Poland plans to achieve compliance with its MTO, set at a structural balance of -1% of GDP, after 2020, i.e. beyond the programme period.* *The recalculated structural balance is expected to worsen by 0.8% of GDP in 2017 and to improve by 0.3% of GDP in 2018. This would lead to a deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO of -1.3% of GDP in 2017 and -0.2% of GDP in 2018. At the same time, the growth rate of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures after correcting for the impact of an exceptional transaction within the general government sector in 2017, is planned to exceed the applicable expenditure benchmark rate in 2017 (leading to a negative impact of 0.4% of GDP on the underlying fiscal position) and to be in line with it in 2018. For 2017, the assessment based on the programme is broadly confirmed by the Commission forecast pointing to a risk of some deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO. In 2018, the Commission projects a deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO of -0.4% of GDP and predicts the growth rate of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures to exceed the expenditure benchmark (leading to a negative impact of 0.5% of GDP on the underlying fiscal position).* ***Over 2017 and 2018 taken together, both indicators point to a risk of a significant deviation from the adjustment path towards the MTO as the deviations from 2017 are not expected to be compensated for in 2018. This would point to a risk of significant deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO in 2018.*** *"* (pp. 18-19)	

	2. Ensure the sustainability and adequacy of the pension system and increase participation in the labour market, by starting to reform the preferential pension arrangements, removing obstacles to more permanent types of employment and improving the labour market-relevance of education and training.	**No progress:** **No progress** in ensuring the sustainability and adequacy of the pension system. Contrary to the CSR, a lowering of the statutory retirement age has been voted in and will enter into force as of October 2017. In the longer term, it will worsen sustainability and adequacy of the pension system. No progress in reforming the preferential pension arrangements, although there are plans to review them with a view to reform them (including those for farmers and miners). **No progress** in increased participation in the labour market. Some measures undertaken so far seem to go in the opposite direction. In particular, lowering the statutory retirement age and the new child benefit could have adverse effects on the labour market participation. Limited progress in removing obstacles to more permanent types of employment. Despite measures taken to reduce segmentation, the use of open-ended contracts is still discouraged by a number of obstacles. To address this, two codification committees were set up to prepare new draft individual and collective Labour Codes by early 2018. Limited progress in improving the labour market-relevance of education and training. The reforms of the higher education system seem to be going in the right direction, but the changes in general education could go in the opposite direction.	**2.** Take steps to **increase labour market participation,** in particular for women, the low-qualified and older people, including by fostering adequate skills and removing obstacles to more permanent types of employment. **Ensure the sustainability and adequacy of the pension system** by taking measures to increase the effective retirement age and by starting to reform the preferential pension arrangements.
	3. Take measures to **remove obstacles to investment** in transport, construction and energy infrastructure, and increase the coverage of spatial planning at local level.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** in removing obstacles to investment in infrastructure. Despite the 2016 amendment to the rail transport law simplifying some investments procedures and enabling their faster implementation, its scope is rather limited and the observed progress with investments on the ground throughout the year has been very slow. In renewable power generation infrastructure, the situation worsened in 2016, as a result of the new law on investment in on-shore wind installations and long-delayed revision of the Renewable Energy Law. **Limited progress** in simplifying construction permitting and rationalising spatial planning at the local level.	**3.** Take measures to **remove barriers to investment,** particularly in the transport sector.

		Construction permits were practically abolished for constructing private houses and other smaller structures, though they are still required for other construction projects. The newly drafted Construction Code contains elements related to spatial planning and aimed at improving the current system, like: consolidating old legislation on spatial planning and construction permitting, streamlining procedures into a single investment decision, reinforcing the role of municipal studies on territorial development and making more stringent the conditions, under which new developments could take place in the absence of the spatial development plan.	

PT	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 SGP: CSR 1 MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 (COM Country Report, February 2017)	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 SGP: CSR 1 MIP: CSR 1, 2, 3, 4
	1. Ensure a durable correction of the excessive deficit, in accordance with the relevant decisions or recommendations under the excessive deficit procedure, by taking the necessary structural measures and by using all windfall gains for deficit and debt reduction. Thereafter, achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of at least 0,6 % of GDP. **Conduct, by February 2017, a comprehensive expenditure review and strengthen expenditure control, cost effectiveness and adequate budgeting** at all levels of public administration. **Ensure the long-term sustainability of the health sector,** without compromising access to primary healthcare. **Reduce the reliance of the pension system on budgetary transfers**. By the end of 2016, refocus ongoing restructuring plans of state-owned enterprises.	**Limited progress** (this excludes an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact). The compliance assessment with the Stability and Growth Pact will be included in Spring when final data for 2016 will be available. **Some progress** in conducting a comprehensive expenditure review. The authorities have started a spending review exercise, mainly based on efficiency measures that involve the health and education ministries; state-owned enterprises and (centralised) public procurement and real estate management). This spending review still falls short of a comprehensive approach since its scope only covers the central government and focused on efficiency savings stemming from streamlining services. **Some progress** in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the healthcare sector. As Portugal is expected to have the highest increase in healthcare costs in the EU by 2060, more efforts for cost compression should be pursued including by integrating primary care, hospital services and continuous care. However, health care prevention and access to primary health care have been improved which will definitely help Portugal meet the long term challenges facing its health care sector, Nonetheless, the increase stock of arrears adds strain to the system's fiscal sustainability in the short-term. **Limited progress** in reducing the reliance of pension system on budgetary transfers. The draft budget for 2017 includes the earmarking of a new progressive tax on real estate portfolios (on top of the IMI) to the social security's Financial Stabilization Fund (worth EUR 160 million in 2017 according to the 2017 draft budgetary plan 2017). Although this earmarking is being presented by the government as an alternative to the excessive reliance on	**1. Ensure the durability of the correction of the excessive deficit.** Pursue a substantial fiscal effort in 2018 in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact, taking into account the need to strengthen the ongoing recovery and to ensure the sustainability of Portugal's public finances. Use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt-to-GDP ratio. **Step up efforts to broaden the expenditure review** to cover a significant share of general government spending across several policies. **Strengthen expenditure control, cost effectiveness and adequate budgeting,** in particular in the health sector with a focus on the reduction of arrears in hospitals and ensure the sustainability of the pension system. To **increase the financial sustainability of state-owned enterprises** set sector-specific efficiency targets in time for the 2018 budget, improving state-owned enterprises' overall net income and decreasing the burden on the State budget.

classical budgetary transfers, this does not address the expenditure side of the pension system sustainability.

No progress in refocusing restructuring plans of state-owned enterprises. In terms of their operational performance state-owned enterprises fared well in 2016, as shown by their positive EBIDTA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization). However, indebtedness remains very high resulting in persistent negative net income. The government so far has not presented any concrete measures to significantly restructure state-owned enterprises.

In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Portugal (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs):

*"**In 2016, Portugal achieved a headline deficit of 2.0% of GDP, thus below the headline deficit target of 2.5% of GDP** requested in the Council decision of 8 August 2016. Moreover, the required fiscal effort is also estimated to have been delivered.*

*Portugal plans an improvement of the structural balance of 0.3% of GDP in 2017 and 0.6% of GDP in 2018, compared to the recommended structural adjustment of 0.6% of GDP towards the MTO in both years. The planned growth rate of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures and one-offs, is planned to exceed the applicable expenditure benchmark rate, leading to negative impacts of 0.6% of GDP on the underlying fiscal position in both years. Following an overall assessment, **this points to a risk of some deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO in both years based on the stability programme**. However**, following an overall assessment on the basis of the Commission 2017 spring forecast, there is a risk of a significant deviation in 2017 and 2018**.*

Based on stability programme data, Portugal plans to make sufficient progress towards compliance with the

		debt reduction benchmark in 2017 and 2018. However, based on the Commission 2017 spring forecast, Portugal is not projected to make sufficient progress towards compliance with the debt reduction benchmark in both years." (pp. 22-23)	
	2. In consultation with social partners, **ensure that the minimum wage is consistent with the objectives of promoting employment and competitiveness across sectors.**	**Limited progress:** **<u>Limited progress</u>** in ensuring that the minimum wage is consistent with promotion of employment and competitiveness. The minimum wage was raised most recently in January 2017, from EUR 530 to EUR 557 i.e. above expected inflation and average productivity increases. While increasing aggregate demand and reducing in-work poverty, in a context of low inflation and high unemployment, continued increases in the minimum wage above productivity might put upward pressures on the overall wage structure, with the risk of affecting employment and competitiveness perspectives. The government established a structure to monitor the impact of minimum wage developments, through quarterly reports which are published and discussed with social partners.	*See CSR 2 (consistency between minimum wage developments and employment)*
	3. Ensure the effective activation of the long-term unemployed and improve the coordination between employment and social services. Strengthen incentives for firms to hire through permanent contracts.	**Some progress:** **<u>Limited progress</u>** in ensuring effective activation of long-term unemployed and in improving coordination between employment and social services. The rate of long-term unemployment remains one of the highest in the EU, despite active labour market measures targeted at long-term unemployed which have been developed in recent years. To address this, the government produced an assessment of active labour market policies. However, no specific measures targeted at integrating the long-term unemployed into the labour market have been adopted since then. The public employment service's planned increased use of online platforms instead of face-to-face-services should enable staff to focus on more personalised services for the long-term unemployed. As part of the ongoing administrative simplification process, one-stop shops for the long-term unemployed are being	**2. Promote hiring on open-ended contracts,** including by reviewing the legal framework. **Ensure the effective activation of the long-term unemployed.** Together with social partners, **ensure that minimum wage developments do not harm employment of the low-skilled.**

		developed, although this initiative has not yet reached the implementation phase. **Some progress** in strengthening incentives for firms to hire through permanent contracts. The Government redesigned its employment support programme to promote hiring on open-ended contracts while restricting the financial support for temporary contracts to specific cases such as the very long-term unemployed. However, the expected impact of the new measure in reducing segmentation is limited in view of the low number of people to be covered.	
	4. Take measures, by October 2016, to **facilitate the cleaning up of the balance sheets of credit institutions and address the high level of non-performing loans.** Reduce the debt bias in corporate taxation and **improve the access to finance** for start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises via the capital market.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** in facilitating the clean-up of credit institutions' balance sheets and addressing the high level of non-performing loans. By Resolution of the Council of Ministers N. 42/2016 of 18 August 2016, the government approved the Capitalizar Programme. Under the programmes's "corporate restructuring" strand, the government intends to improve existing mechanisms for restructuring the balance of viable economic enterprises and the recovery of credits. The government is also taking action to revise its insolvency regime through the following: mechanisms to control the access to the PER (implementation period: first quarter of 2017); access of judicial administrators to the Citius dataset, the IT system to support the activities of the courts) (fully implemented); the right of judicial administrators to directly access the various databases (implementation planned for the first quarter of 2017); creation of electronic certificates (expected to be implemented in the first quarter of 2017); possibility of exemption from holding a meeting of creditors; changes to the legal framework to the new registration rules on cross-border insolvencies and interconnection of registries. The tax law has been changed to remove disincentives to write-off. The central bank is conducting additional supervisory work, including by assessing banks' capability to manage non-performing loans, The central bank is also providing guidance to banks on how to	**3.** Step up efforts to **clean up the balance sheets of credit institutions** by implementing a comprehensive strategy addressing non-performing loans, including by enhancing the secondary market for bad assets. **Improve the access to capital,** in particular for start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises.

		screen different types of non-performing loans, and how to manage them. They are also considering an external servicing of loans, although the details have not been provided as to whether this would entail the creation of a market of distressed assets. Overall, a comprehensive strategy appears to be lacking. **Some progress** in reducing the debt bias in corporate taxation. The 2017 draft budgetary plan includes broadening the scope of the allowance for corporate equity (ACE) regime. The regime now applies to all companies (previously it applied only to small and medium-sized enterprises) and shareholders (not only individuals and venture capital investors). In addition, the allowance has been increased from 5 % during 4 years to 7 % during 6 years. **Limited progress** in improving the access to finance for start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises via the capital market. Under the Capitalizar Programme, the government has put forward measures to ease businesses' financing needs. A new credit line with a mutual guarantee has been made available and will allow financing to companies of more than EUR 1 billion in financing for companies. In parallel, the government has put in place another programme (Programa Semente) to finance for start ups and small enterprises in their early stages (seed capital), helping them to raise equity finance by offering tax reliefs, for at least two years, to individual investors who purchase new shares in such companies, These programmes are expected to improve the financing of companies in Portugal, provided that they are swiftly and fully implemented.	
	5. Increase transparency and efficiency in public procurement as regards public-private partnerships and concessions. By the end of 2016, **improve and accelerate administrative and licensing procedures, accelerate tax litigations and reduce regulatory barriers,** especially in business services. Incentivise cooperation between universities and the business sector.	**Some progress:** **Some progress** in increasing transparency in public procurement. Transparency and reliability of public procurement data is improving. The institute for Monitoring Public Procurement (IMPIC) is moving from a case by case approach on correcting data in BASE to a more systematic and automated system. Access to procurement data by control and prosecution authorities is not automatic, because of the legal framework on data	**4.** Implement a roadmap to **further reduce the administrative burden and tackle regulatory barriers** in construction and business services by the end of 2017. **Increase the efficiency of insolvency and tax proceedings.**

		protection, which hampers efficient checks and investigations. By Decree N. 18/2016, the government has established quarterly monitoring and reporting procedures related for local and regional public private partnerships and concessions. The use of direct awards remains high and there are weaknesses in the tender procedures due to: (i) insufficient justification underpinning the recourse to direct awards; (ii) splitting of contracts; (iii) lack of capacity and professionalization an (iv) limited checks. **Limited progress** in improving and accelerating licensing procedures by the end of 2016. The SIMPLEX + initiative includes some cross cutting simplification measures, yet to be implemented, but progress in enhancing the business environment has largely stalled in relation to sector specific regulation. **Some progress** in accelerating tax litigations by the end of 2016. The Tax Administration has drawn up a multiannual plan to combat fraud, improve tax collection and simplify tax procedures. The 2017 draft budgetary plan introduced provisions for the tax authorities to: reduce response time for issuing binding rulings (Autoridade Tributária) to a maximum of 75 days in all urgent requests, significantly reduce the deadline for urgent requests; also, assess the possibility of reducing the costs of urgent binding ruling. Despite these efforts, the tax courts' clearance rate remains low. **Limited progress** in reducing regulatory barriers especially in business services by the end of 2016. Previous reform efforts targeting the most restrictive business services, including regulated professions, were halted and, in some cases, reversed. Restrictions on corporate groups for professional firms and restrictive regulation of legal professions (legal form, shareholding, management, multidisciplinary, advertising restrictions) set to remain in place. **Some progress** in incentivising cooperation between universities and the business sector. New initiatives announced include the creation of collaborative laboratories, technological centres for engineering	

		activities and new business innovation contracts. The government is currently preparing a revision of the Higher Education system. The new programme to modernise and revamp polytechnic institutes focuses on matching both R&D activities and dual VET programmes (CTeSPs) with regional needs. The Innovation Agency (ANI) is working to increase knowledge and collaborative innovation and has identified further potential players to bring into the innovation eco-system (including businesses and research organizations). It is also pushing for more collaboration as a priority for further action. However, there is no overall comprehensive strategy to foster cooperation between universities and the business sector: cooperation still relies mostly on isolated initiatives from specific universities or businesses.	

RO	[Country Specific Recommendations 2016](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**	[Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016](#) **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	[Country Specific Recommendations 2017](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. Limit the deviation from the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,5 % of GDP in 2017 unless the medium-term budgetary objective is respected with a lower effort. **Ensure the application of the fiscal framework and strengthen further tax compliance and collection.** Ensure that legislative initiatives do not undermine legal certainty and do not put at risk financial stability. If necessary, adopt measures that mitigate such risks.	**Limited progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact). CSRs related to compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact will be assessed in spring once the final data are available. There was **no progress** on ensuring the application of the fiscal framework. The 2016 budget does not comply with the deficit rule, which contains the obligation to comply with the MTO; as in previous years, the authorities did not send an update of the fiscal strategy to Parliament by the statutory deadline of 15 August. **Limited progress.** There are slight improvements with regard to the compliance ratios for tax declarations and payments for both natural persons and companies compared to the previous year. The tax administration (ANAF) and Labour inspection maintained their efforts in terms of inspections and audits, yet the results are not better compared to last year. ANAF introduced also an audience with the applicant as an additional step before issuing the final decision with regard to the VAT registration. The legislation for the registration and deregistration for VAT purposes has been modified and clarified again and the procedures for VAT reimbursement were adapted, respectively, in the course of 2016. The mandatory but progressive introduction of electronic cash-register connected to the National Agency for Fiscal Administration (ANAF) IT system is pursued, but further delays to the official deadlines were introduced. To tackle sectorial tax evasion, a special annual income tax will replace corporate income tax in specific business areas, such as accommodation services and bars/ restaurants, from 2017. Irrespective of the sales or the net profits of the business, the tax to be paid will be computed based on coefficients, such as the surface of	**1.** In 2017, **ensure compliance with the Council Recommendation of 16 June 2017 with a view to correcting the significant deviation from the adjustment path toward the medium-term budgetary objective.** In 2018, pursue a substantial fiscal effort in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact. **Ensure the full application of the fiscal framework. Strengthen tax compliance and collection.** Fight undeclared work, including by ensuring the systematic use of integrated controls.

		premises, the seasonality or the location of the business. Moreover, as of 2017, self-employed and family businesses will be limited to the number of business activities they can perform and in the number of persons they can employ. **Some progress** was made on safeguarding financial stability. The law on debt discharge ("datio in solutum") was promulgated with retroactive application, but a recent decision of the Constitutional Court has mitigated some of the potential risks on financial stability. The CHF-denominated loan conversion law adopted by Parliament may put strain on several banks. However, before its enactment, the law was sent to the Constitutional Court for a constitutional heck. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Convergence Programme for Romania (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"**In 2016**, from a position of -0.6% of GDP in 2015, i.e. above the MTO, the structural balance deteriorated to -2.6% of GDP, pointing to a significant deviation from the MTO. The growth of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures and one-offs, was well above the expenditure benchmark, also pointing to a significant deviation. **The overall assessment points to a significant deviation from the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact in 2016.*** ***In 2017 and 2018, a significant deviation from the adjustment path towards the MTO is expected** both based on the programme and based on the Commisison 2017 spring forecast, putting at risk the compliance with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Pact.* *Moreover, although the programme projects the headline deficit to amount to 2.9% of GDP in 2017, according to the Commission 2017 spring forecast Romania's deficit is projected to exceed the 3% of GDP reference value in 2017 and in 2018 based on a no-policy change assumption."* (pp; 16-17)	

	2. Strengthen the National Employment Agency's services to employers and jobseekers, in particular by tailoring services to jobseeker profiles, better linking them with social assistance, including social services, and reaching out to unregistered young people. **Establish, in consultation with social partners, objective criteria for setting the minimum wage. Take action to prevent early school leaving and increase the provision of quality education**, in particular among Roma. Adopt the equalisation of the pension age for men and women.	**Some progress:** **Substantial progress** was made in strengthening the National Employment Agency's (NEA) services. The NEA is undergoing a major change process reflected in a strategy and including 1) establishing for the first time an initial profiling and segmentation process, which became a working procedure and legislation in October 2016 (most of the people in NEA database have already been profiled); 2) Adoption of a catalogue of services, for the first time bringing together the service offer of the organisation towards jobseekers and towards employers; 3) Reinforcement of case management capacity - pilot project developed in October/November; to be up-scaled through the ESF; 4) Setting up an integrated approach to NEETs outreach, including a substantial increase in agency staff for the delivery of the Youth Guarantee- to be rolled out. The Youth Guarantee has so far only partially reached young NEETs. The NEA also plans to reinforce its capacity to strengthen its services for employers. The active labour market policies have been revised to provide more incentives for take up and several disadvantaged groups benefit for the first time from some ALMPs. A national mobility plan aims to improve the internal mobility. As regards linking employment with social services, a pilot project, finance d with EU funds, will be rolled out. This would target 100 deprived communities and would set up integrated teams that include social assistants, community health assistants/mediators and education counsellors/mediators. In the long run, these integrated teams are supposed to be scaled up at national level, in over 500 deprived communities. A common order of the ministers for Labour, Education and Health establishes the working methods of integrated teams. Special advisers dealing with disadvantaged groups are proposed to be hired in the Public employment service and would make the link with social services and integrated teams. The minimum inclusion income law increases the coverage and adequacy of social benefits and strengthens the provision of active labour market policies for Guaranteed Minimum Income beneficiaries. These reforms have the potential of tangible and lasting effects,	**2. Strengthen targeted activation policies and integrated public services,** focusing on those furthest away from the labour market. **Adopt legislation equalising the pension age for men and women. Establish a transparent mechanism for minimum wage-setting,** in consultation with social partners. **Improve access to quality mainstream education**, in particular for Roma and children in rural areas. **In healthcare, shift to outpatient care and curb informal payments.**

		but only if implemented and sustained over the longer term. **Limited progress** was made on minimum wage setting. In January 2016, the government set up a tripartite working group with the task of establishing an indexation mechanism that would make future minimum wage adjustments automatic. This group has commissioned a study to analyse all the economic and social aspects of the minimum wage in Romania. As a follow up to this and based on the results of the study, clear guidelines and criteria, endorsed by social partners are supposed to be established in the first quarter of 2017. However, the new government announced the increase of the minimum wage from 1 February 2017 and subsequent increases until 2020, despite tripartite ongoing work on a minimum wage setting mechanism. **Some progress** was made to tackle early school leaving and increase the provision of quality education. The situation for Roma inclusion in schools remains challenging. As a step on the implementation of the Early school Leaving Strategy, authorities have launched two national calls for proposals supported by the European Social Fund (approximately EUR 200 million) to tackle drop-out ('School for all') and improve the provision of quality education in disadvantaged schools ('Motivated teachers in disadvantaged schools'). These projects aim to address two of the main drivers of early school leaving, namely insufficient prevention measures and insufficient provision of quality education. 'School for All' seeks to finance a wide range of activities, including integrated interventions for students and their parents, after-school programmes, and scholarships. The second call specifically aims to increase teaching quality in disadvantaged schools, in particular for Roma and schools in rural areas. The projects are now in the evaluation phase, with implementation expected to start the latest in September 2017. Therefore, the impact on reducing drop-outs or increasing teaching quality in disadvantaged school is yet to be seen. Other recent measures to tackle early school leaving include a warm meal pilot programme running in 50 schools, and full	

		reimbursement of commuting costs for students from rural areas. The methodology for teachers' allowances was changed to include criteria on working with children at risk of drop-out (ministerial order from 22 December). To support the participation of poor children in pre-school education (empirically shown to prevent early school leaving) authorities are implementing the programme 'Every child in kindergarten' providing social vouchers on condition of attendance. To improve take-up, the application procedures were simplified. Although the number of beneficiary children who had not gone to kindergarten before is increasing, it remains relatively low (2 700 out of 67 000). Modernisation of the curricula for pre-school education is underway. To increase quality in education, authorities have also approved the curricular frameworks for lower secondary education (grades 5-8). The new curriculum is expected to enter into force in September for 5th graders. However, plans to reform the curricula high school education have been delayed. To increase managerial capacities in schools, a competition for school principals was organized, albeit allowing for some exceptions. Anti-segregation legislation was improved by expanding the criteria and strengthening the responsibilities of school inspectorates which is expected to lead to a more inclusive education in schools for Roma and other disadvantaged groups. However, in the absence of monitoring criteria progress has yet to be seen. While a number of positive measures have been initiated, these are unlikely to be sufficient to address the challenge. **<u>No progress</u>** was made on the equalisation of the pensionable age for men and women. The draft law submitted to Parliament in 2013 has been adopted by the Senate, but not by the lower Chamber.	

	3. Curb informal payments in the healthcare system and increase the availability of outpatient care. Strengthen the independence and transparency of human resources management in the public administration. Simplify administrative procedures for business and the public. **Strengthen corporate governance of state-owned enterprises.**	**Some progress:** **Some progress** was made with curbing informal payments in the healthcare system. In line with the new National Anti-corruption Strategy for 2016-2020, legislation was adopted in November 2016 to revamp the existing patient feedback mechanism. In 2014, the Ministry of Health put in place a patient feedback form mechanism for reporting informal payments. Reporting under the mechanism was not reliable and is now being revamped. The National Anti-corruption Strategy for 2016-2020 adopted in August planned to revise the existing patient feedback mechanism to eliminate the involvement of medical units in the collection of information on patients' experience. Consequently, new legislative measures were adopted in November 2016 to empower patients, also addressing the role of ethics councils in public health units, and sanctions. In addition, the salaries of health professionals have been improved (Emergency Ordinance no. 20 of June 8, 2016 amending and supplementing Government Emergency Ordinance no. 57/2015 on the salaries of staff paid from public funds in 2016). **Limited progress** was made with increasing the availability of outpatient care. Some measures have been taken in this regard, but overall a shift to outpatient care is still at a very early stage to consider a substantial fulfilment of the recommendation. The Ministry of Health has developed regional healthcare plans that include a mapping of needs for infrastructure and services. The regional plans, together with the national health strategy, offer a good basis for the planning of investments from ESIF and other sources. The first monitoring report of the national health strategy has been published mid-2016, the second report being expected in February 2017. A Working Group has been created to address ambulatory care; it is announced that outpatients' centres will be developed in the context of the Regional Plans including a pilot project in the South-West region; on the other hand, on primary healthcare, the budget in 2016 has increased overall 5 % with higher increases (up to 15 %) for the expenditure per capita and the value of	*See CSR 2 (healthcare system)* *See CSR 3 (independence and transparency in public administration)*

		the points for service. Nonetheless, the shift to outpatient care is still at a very early stage. Likewise, the implementation of the World Bank´s project Health Sector Reform including the target of strengthening ambulatory care is unsatisfactory (World Bank, 2016). **Limited progress** was made in human resources management in the public administration. Strategies for Civil Service and Staff Training have been adopted, however the current legislative and institutional set-up makes it hard to effectively implement. **Some progress** was made on the simplification of administrative procedures for business and the public. Measures taken in 2016 include emergency ordinance n. 41/2016 to simplify administrative procedures and facilitate relations between citizens and the public administration; and the adoption in November 2016 of first elements of a second legislative package, including emergency ordinance 84/2016 amending the Fiscal Procedure Code contains also measures to simplify administrative procedures for businesses, including e.g. procedures to obtain a fiscal code, for the reactivation of inactive taxpayers, widening the use of remote means of payment (e.g. home banking, mobile banking) to pay taxes, wider provision of e-tools to pay taxes and some specific fee reductions; further development of the RIA framework; introduction of income tax exemptions for R&D tasks and activities, and clarification of tasks and activities exempt from income taxation for IT professionals; adoption of OUG 35/2016 for the modification and completion of the land registry law 7/1996, important both for agriculture and for infrastructure projects. The substantial measures taken in 2016 to increase transparency (public consultation and debates on draft legislation etc), are being reversed in 2017. **Substantial progress** was made in SOEs corporate governance. The bylaws supporting Law 111/2016 on SOEs corporate governance were adopted within the deadline, in October 2016. As Law 111/2016 applies to all SOEs, the Ministry of Finance started contacts with	

		the larger local authorities to improve awareness of the new rules. The H1 2016 budget execution of SOEs under the central government was made public. However, the hiring of professional managers has not yet started raising concerns on the implementation of law 111/2016.	
	4. Improve access to integrated public services, extend basic infrastructure and foster economic diversification, in particular in rural areas. Adopt and implement the transport master plan. **Strengthen public investment project prioritisation and preparation.**	**Some progress:** Despite delays, in 2016 there was **some progress** with the completion of action plans for ex-ante conditionality on health, transport, public procurement and RD&I. This has created a basis for strategic planning of future ESIF investments in infrastructure for public services and SMEs. However, the institutional and operational setup of ESIF programmes is still not completed and a few key ex-ante conditionality items are not yet fulfilled, creating a risk of further delays in implementation. 348 projects of a value of 252 million EUR (19% of allocation) for investments in rural infrastructure (roads, water supply/waste water systems, education and social infrastructure) have been contracted. In August 2016 the government further launched a comprehensive IT programme, developed jointly with the private sector, to increase the inter-operability across different levels of administration and the quality of public services (GovITHub). Some progress was made on improving access to integrated services in rural areas, marking a shift from benefits towards service provision. As part of a pilot project, integrated services will be introduced in around 100 most marginalised communities, through teams at community level, mostly in rural areas. When scaled up, it can produce substantial progress concerning the provision of integrated services. ESF calls at national level have been launched, covering disadvantaged communities, including in disadvantaged areas. A comprehensive set of measures was adopted in early 2016 aimed at improving living standards, stimulating productivity and economic diversification in the rural areas. A set of measures was adopted in 2016 aimed at increasing the wealth in rural areas and developing the rural middle class. The Rural Development Programme has started to be implemented. Additional 533 projects of a value of 49 MEUR (16% of allocation) for investments in diversification of economic activities and setting-up of	**3.** Adopt legislation to **ensure a professional and independent civil service,** applying objective criteria. **Strengthen project prioritisation and preparation in public investment.** Ensure the timely full and sustainable implementation of **the national public procurement strategy.**

		non-agricultural activities in rural areas have been contracted. While there is progress on contracting, implementation of the projects on the ground is just starting. Romania still has to spend by 2023 around 1.2 BEUR for investments in rural infrastructure and 275 MEUR for diversification of rural economy. **<u>Some progress.</u>** The Transport Master Plan was adopted in September 2016. The Railway Reform Authority, set-up in October 2016 and expected to become fully operational by mid-2017, should take the necessary measures to make the operation of railway transport more efficient. To speed up of investments in road infrastructure, the government has also split the national authority in charge of road construction into two bodies, one for infrastructure investments (CNIR) and one for infrastructure administration (CNAIR). Performance contracts between the national companies and the Ministry of Transport are currently developed. **<u>Limited progress</u>** was made with strengthening public investment project prioritisation and preparation. In August, a change to the ordinance 88 obliged the line ministries to take into account the public investment priority list in the budget preparation. However, no other steps have been made to enhance the role of the existing public investment prioritisation unit in the Ministry of Finance and to improve the prioritisation and preparation of all public investment projects.	

SI	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 3, 4**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 1, 3**
	1. Following the correction of the excessive deficit, **achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,6 % of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and in 2017.** Set a medium-term budgetary objective that respects the requirements of the Stability and Growth Pact. Strengthen the fiscal framework by appointing an independent fiscal council and amending the Public Finance Act. **Complete and implement the reform of the long-term care and healthcare systems**, making them more cost-efficient to ensure long-term sustainability of accessible and quality care. By the end of 2017, adopt the necessary measures to **ensure the long-term sustainability and adequacy of the pension system.**	**Limited progress** (this overall evaluation excludes an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact). The compliance assessment with the Stability and Growth Pact will be included in Spring when final data for 2016 will be available. **Limited progress** was made regarding the fiscal framework. The revised Public Finance Act was adopted by the Parliament in December 2016, but the appointment of the Fiscal Council was further delayed. Following three unsuccessful public calls for applicants, the Government will have to restart an open call for applications to find members for the Fiscal Council. **Limited progress** was made regarding long-term care reform. The pilot project to determine long-term care needs and support proposed legislative solutions is being prepared. **Some progress** was made regarding healthcare reform. The proposed draft Health Care and Health Insurance Act, which is the central piece of the reform, has been put into public consultations in February 2017 and will be forwarded to the National Assembly in 2017. In December 2016, also the proposals to amend the Health Services Act and the Patient Rights Act were presented and the new Pharmacies Act was adopted. **Limited progress** has been made regarding the long-term sustainability and adequacy of pension system. The White Paper on pensions was adopted in April 2016 and has opened a wide public consultation on the future of the pension system. However, the White Paper on pensions is a non-legislative act that needs to be followed up with adoption of legislative acts, needed to address the 2016 CSR.	**1. Pursue a substantial fiscal effort in 2018 in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact,** taking into account the need to strengthen the ongoing recovery and to ensure the sustainability of Slovenia's public finances. **Adopt and implement the proposed reform of the healthcare system and adopt the planned reform of long-term care,** increasing cost-effectiveness, accessibility and quality care. Fully tap the potential of centralised procurement in the health sector. Adopt the necessary measures to **ensure the long-term sustainability and adequacy of the pension system.**

		In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Slovenia (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"The medium-term budgetary objective — a balanced budget in structural terms, an objective which does not respect the requirements of the Stability and Growth Pact — is planned to be reached by 2020. However, based on the recalculated structural balance, the medium-term budgetary objective would not be met by the programme horizon.* ***In 2016, Slovenia complied with the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO.*** ***In 2017, based on the stability programme Slovenia is expected to meet the requirements under the preventive arm of the SGP.*** *However,* ***based on the Commission spring forecast there is a risk of some deviation from the adjustment path towards the MTO.*** *In 2018, based on the stability programme Slovenia is expected to meet the requirements preventive arm of the SGP. However, based on the Commission spring forecast there is a risk of significant deviation from the adjustment path towards the MTO.* *With respect to the debt criterion, both the stability programme and the Commission 2017 spring forecast indicate sufficient progress towards compliance with the debt criterion in 2017 and 2018."* (p. 22)	
	2. In consultation with social partners, **increase the employability of low-skilled and older workers**, including through targeted lifelong learning and activation measures.	**Limited progress:** **Limited progress** has been made. The analysis of the situation of older workers on the labour market has been adopted on 22 December 2016. While the spending on the active labour market policies stayed at the same level, the analysis of their effectiveness is under way. Active labour market policy measures targeting older workers still need to be intensified and the analysis of the effectiveness of active labour market policies is being	**2.** Intensify efforts to **increase the employability of low-skilled and older workers,** particularly through targeted lifelong learning and activation measures.

		prepared. It is also not yet clear what will be done as regards to lifelong learning.	
	3. Improve the financing conditions for creditworthy business, including by facilitating durable resolution of non- performing loans and access to alternative financing sources. **Ensure the proper implementation of the bank asset management company strategy.**	**Some progress:** **Some progress** has been made on reducing the level of non-performing loans. These loans continue to fall, but their level is still high. The Bank of Slovenia has implemented a number of measures that are giving banks incentives to reduce their non-performing loans sustainably. They have also shown a willingness to take part in the Structural Reforms Support Service projects, which should further help the process. **Limited progress** has been made regarding improving the financing conditions for creditworthy business by facilitating access to alternative financing sources. The Slovenian Enterprise Fund and the SID bank have introduced only new debt instruments for SMEs including measures such as microcredits. One scheme of seed capital (some EUR 3.9 million) was implemented in 2016 by the Slovenian Enterprise Fund and some 47 SMEs were supported. Other alternative financing instruments, including venture capital and equity are planned with use of ESIF **Some progress** has been made regarding the implementing of the Bank Asset Management Company's strategy.	**3. Improve the financing conditions,** including by facilitating a durable resolution of non-performing loans and access to alternative sources of financing. **Ensure the full implementation of the bank asset management company strategy. Reduce the administrative burden on business** deriving from rules on spatial planning and construction permits and **ensure good governance of state-owned enterprises.**
	4. Take measures to modernise public administration and **reduce the administrative burden on business**. **Improve the governance and the performance of state-owned enterprises.**	**Some progress:** **Some progress** has been made regarding the modernisation of the public administration and regarding the reduction of the administrative burden. The implementation the public administration development strategy 2015-2020 is ongoing; however certain specific measures from this strategy have been substantially delayed (i.e. the adoption of the Civil Servants Act). The government programme for reducing the administrative burden is estimated to have created total savings of in total of EUR 365 million of savings between 2009 and 2015. The 9th progress report of the Single Document shows that more than half of 318 measures to reduce the	*See CSR 3 (reducing administrative burden on business, improving governance of state-owned enterprises)*

		administrative burden have been realised. The SME test was introduced on 1 June 2016 and is now obligatory for all new laws prepared under regular procedure but it is still too soon to assess its effects. **Some progress** has been made regarding the governance of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The Slovenian Sovereign Holding (SSH) is managing SOEs in accordance with the regulatory framework in place. End-2015 results show an improved profitability of SOEs under SSH's management. An asset management plan for 2017, quantifying the performance indicators for each separate SOE and updating a list of assets for divestment has been approved by the government in January 2017. A procedure to appoint a new management board is underway, following the CEOs resignation as a result of pressures exerted on the SSH ahead of its initiative to replace the Port of Koper (Luka Koper) supervisory board.	

SK 	Country Specific Recommendations 2016 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**	Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016 **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	Country Specific Recommendations 2017 **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. Achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of 0,25 % of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and of 0,5 % of GDP in 2017. Improve the cost-effectiveness of the healthcare system. **Take measures to increase tax compliance.**	**Limited progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth pact): **Limited progress** has been made in improving the cost-effectiveness of the healthcare system: as a comprehensive spending review has identified major cost inefficiencies and potential cost savings, but these are not yet backed by concrete measures. **Limited progress** has been made in improving tax compliance. While some measures have been launched and appear promising, the system as a whole remains too focused on control, with little attention paid to voluntary compliance. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Slovakia (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"In 2016, Slovakia's headline deficit declined to 1.7 % of GDP. An improvement of 0.8 % of GDP in the structural balance met the required adjustment towards the MTO. The growth rate of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures and one-offs, also respected the applicable expenditure benchmark rate. Nevertheless, over 2015-2016 taken together, the expenditure benchmark pillar points to some deviation.* ***An overall assessment, taking the expenditure benchmark as a leading indicator, thus points to some deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO in 2016.*** *Slovakia plans an improvement of the structural balance of 0.3 % of GDP in 2017 and 0.6 % of GDP in 2018, when it plans to reach the MTO. This path suggests a deviation of 0.2 % of GDP from the required adjustment path*	**1. Pursue a substantial fiscal effort in 2018 in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact,** taking into account the need to strengthen the ongoing recovery and to ensure the sustainability of Slovakia's public finances. **Improve the cost-effectiveness of the healthcare system,** including by implementing the value-for-money project.

		towards the MTO in 2017, implying a risk of some deviation. In 2018, on the other hand, the planned progress towards the MTO appears appropriate according to the authorities' plans. However, the Commission 2017 ***spring forecast points to a risk of some deviation in 2017, and an overall assessment suggests a risk of significant deviation in 2018.****"* (p. 18)	
	2. Improve activation measures for the long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged groups, including individualised services and targeted training. **Facilitate the employment of women**, in particular by extending the provision of affordable, quality childcare. **Improve educational outcomes** by making the teaching profession more attractive and by increasing the participation of Roma children from early childhood in mainstream education.	**Some progress:** **<u>Some progress</u>** has been achieved in improving activation measures. An action plan on the integration of the long-term unemployed was adopted in late 2016 in order to address the lack of individualised services and training. However, its timely and adequate implementation will need to be monitored. No targeted efforts have been undertaken to help integrate Roma into the labour market. **<u>Some progress</u>** has been identified in increasing the capacity of and access to early childhood education and care, particularly for the over-threes. For children under three, the number of private facilities has increased slightly but no progress has been made in setting up a legislative framework for childcare services. **<u>Limited progress</u>** has been made in the educational dimension of the CSR. Some measures have been taken in order to raise the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Substantial annual pay rises have been agreed or are planned for 2016 and 2017. The government aims to raise entry requirements for teaching and improve training. A reform to support socially and ethnically inclusive education, including of Roma pupils, entered into force in 2016, but effectively implementing the reform will require further efforts and political commitment.	**2. Improve activation measures for disadvantaged groups,** including by implementing the action plan for the long-term unemployed and by providing individualised services and targeted training. **Enhance employment opportunities for women,** especially by extending affordable, quality childcare. **Improve the quality of education** and increase the participation of Roma in inclusive mainstream education.
	3. Consolidate governance, reinforce the shift from price only to quality-based competition and improve the prosecution of illicit practices in public procurement**. Improve** the transparency, quality and effectiveness of human resources management in public administration, in particular by adopting a new civil service act, and **the**	**Limited progress:** **<u>Limited progress</u>** has been made in improving competition and fighting illicit practices in public procurement. While some initiatives for fostering	**3. Improve competition and transparency in public procurement operations and step up the fight against corruption** by stronger enforcement of existing legislation. Adopt and implement a comprehensive plan to **lower administrative and regulatory barriers for businesses. Improve the effectiveness of the justice**

	effectiveness of the justice system. **Adopt a comprehensive plan to address administrative and regulatory barriers for businesses.**	quality-based procurement procedures have been launched, these are not yet systematic or concrete. **Some progress** has been made in improving human resource management in public administration. While the new Civil Service Act has the potential to materially improve the situation, this will require determined implementation of the Act, which will be applicable only from the second half of 2017 onwards. **Limited progress** has been made towards improving the effectiveness of the justice system. Although the new government made this a key priority, the impact of new measures (some of which are still in draft) cannot be assessed yet. **No progress** has been made in adopting a comprehensive plan to address administrative and regulatory barriers for businesses. In the 2016 national reform programme the Slovak government committed to adopt a corresponding long-term strategy, but the plan has not yet been formulated.	**system,** including a reduction in the length of civil and commercial cases.

FI	[Country Specific Recommendations 2016](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: CSR 2, 3**	[Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016](#) **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	[Country Specific Recommendations 2017](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. Achieve an annual fiscal adjustment of at least 0,5 % of GDP towards the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016 and 0,6 % in 2017. Use any windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. **Ensure timely adoption and implementation of the administrative reform** with a view to better cost-effectiveness of social and healthcare services.	**Some progress** (this overall evaluation excludes an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact). The compliance assessment with the Stability and Growth Pact will be included in Spring when final data for 2016 will be available. **Some progress** has been made on the adoption and implementation of the social and healthcare reform. The reform has been undertaken in order to ensure the continued access to the good quality services while ensuring the long-term sustainability of public finances. The government has prepared the first half of the draft legislation that is needed for the reform to take effect from 2019. The 27 draft laws have undergone a public consultation. Legislation regarding the freedom of choice for the citizens was not part of the public consultation. The work needs to continue, but thanks to the timely preparation of the legislation creating the new administrative structure, it can be concluded that there is some progress in implementing the recommendation. In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its [Assessment of the 2017 Stability Programme for Finland](#) (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"In 2016, Finland achieved an improvement of the structural balance of 0.3% of GDP, which was marginally below the required adjustment towards the MTO. On the other hand, the growth rate of government expenditure, net of discretionary revenue measures, complied with the applicable expenditure benchmark rate by a positive margin.* ***Following an overall assessment, this appears in line with the recommended adjustment path towards the MTO.***	**1. Pursue its fiscal policy in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact,** which entails achieving its medium-term budgetary objective in 2018, taking into account the allowances linked to unusual events, the implementation of the structural reforms and investments for which a temporary deviation is granted. **Ensure timely adoption and implementation of the administrative reform** to improve cost-effectiveness of social and healthcare services.

		*Finland plans a deterioration of the structural balance of 0.5% of GDP in 2017 and an improvement of 0.3% of GDP in 2018. Taking into account the temporary deviations granted in 2017 and the previously-granted allowance under the unusual event clause which is carried forward for a period of three years, the recommended structural adjustment for 2017 is -0.5% of GDP. **Based on the Commission spring forecast, an overall assessment would point to consistency with the required adjustment.** In 2018, taking into account the previously-granted allowances under the unusual event clause and the structural reform and investment clauses, the planned progress towards the MTO appears consistent with the preventive arm requirements in 2018. Based on the* Commission's *spring forecast,* ***the projected path of government debt in 2017 and 2018 is not consistent with the debt reduction benchmark****."* (p. 22)	
	2. While respecting the role of social partners, ensure that the wage setting system enhances local wage bargaining and removes rigidities, contributing to competitiveness and a more export industry-led approach. **Increase incentives to accept work and ensure targeted and sufficient active labour market measures**, including for people with a migrant background. **Take measures to reduce regional and skills mismatches.**	**Some progress:** **Substantial progress** has been made in ensuring that the wage-setting system enhances local wage bargaining and removes rigidities, contributing to competitiveness and a more export industry-led approach. The social partners agreed on the Competitiveness Pact, which also extends the possibilities for local bargaining. A new wage-setting model is being negotiated for the next round of wage negotiations, where wages in the tradable sector serve as an anchor for the rest of the economy. The extent to which there will be results from the extended local bargaining possibilities remains to be seen. **Some progress** has been achieved on incentives to accept work and ensure targeted and sufficient active labour market measures, including for people with a migrant background. To increase incentives to accept work among parents of young children, the government has proposed in the 2017 budget the reduction of fees for early childhood education. From the benefits side, Finland has tightened the obligation to accept a job offer and the obligation to participate in activation schemes. The duration of earnings-related unemployment insurance was reduced by one fifth to 400 days. From	**2. Promote the further alignment of wages with productivity developments,** fully respecting the role of social partners. **Take targeted active labour market policy measures** to address employment and social challenges, **provide incentives to accept work and promote entrepreneurship.**

		2017, mandatory interviews with all the unemployed will be carried out at three-month intervals to monitor progress with the individual employment plans. The government has also introduced additional funding for migrants' integration and a new measure offering immigrants training that will support their employability. **<u>Some progress</u>** has been achieved in the area of reducing regional and skills mismatches. The reform of the vocational education system, expected to be finalised in 2018 includes making it more responsive to labour market needs. The rules regarding acceptable commuting distance for jobseekers will be stricter and the unemployment benefit can be used as a mobility allowance.	
	3. Continue pursuing efforts to **increase competition in services,** including in retail**.** Promote entrepreneurship and investment, including by **reducing administrative and regulatory burden**, to foster growth of high value added production.	**Some progress:** **<u>Some progress</u>** has been made on competition in services, including retail. Establishment conditions for retail outlets will be eased. The proposed legislation increases the minimum surface of the more tightly regulated large retail units from 2 000 to 4 000 square meters. The possibilities to establish these units in areas other than the city centres will be increased and access to outlets will become a more important factor in the planning than the outlet's nature and size. Transport and gas market reforms have been announced and the draft legislation prepared. **<u>Some progress</u>** has been made on the promotion of entrepreneurship and investment and fostering growth of high value added production. In order to promote entrepreneurship, the government put forward a subsidy (grant or a wage subsidy) for one-person companies to hire a worker, reviewed the rules that guide the recruitment of foreign specialists and the creation of a public database of inventions that everyone can access and exploit. An innovation voucher for SMEs is in preparation, aimed at promoting the use of outside expertise in innovating and improving products or services. The government also plans to combine the existing public support instruments into a single 'growth service'.	**3.** Continue to **improve the regulatory framework and reduce the administrative burden** to increase competition in services and to promote investment.

SE	**Country Specific Recommendations 2016** **SGP: -** **MIP: CSR 1**	**Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016** **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	**Country Specific Recommendations 2017** **SGP: -** **MIP: CSR 1**
	1. Address the rise in household debt by adjusting fiscal incentives, in particular by **gradually limiting the tax deductibility of mortgage interest payments or by increasing recurrent property taxes.** Ensure that the macro-prudential authority has the legal mandate to implement measures to safeguard financial stability in a timely manner. **Foster investment in housing and improve the efficiency of the housing market,** including by introducing more flexibility in setting rental prices and by revising the design of the capital gains tax to facilitate more housing transactions.	**Limited progress** (this overall assessment of CSR 1 does not include an assessment of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact): **No progress** in adjusting fiscal incentives, i.e. changing the mortgage interest deductibility rules or property taxation. **Limited progress** on enhancing the legal mandate of the macroprudential authority. The authorities have achieved cross-party agreement on strengthening the macroprudential authority's mandate. However, concrete proposals are still to be published later in 2017, so it remains uncertain what form the new legal framework will ultimately take (see 4.2.2). **Some progress** on fostering investment in housing and improving the efficiency of the housing market. The authorities have put forward a 22-point plan to increase land available for development, further streamline building regulations and shorten planning lead times, and to address a number of other specific inefficiencies in the housing market (see 4.2.3). However, the timeline and precise implementation form of most proposed measures remain uncertain. In addition, no significant policy action has been taken to introduce more flexibility in setting rental prices. A temporary reform of the deferral rules for capital gains taxes on property transaction was introduced, but this will probably have limited effect (as also discussed in 4.2.3). In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2017 Convergence Programme for Sweden (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): *"**In 2016, Sweden achieved an improvement of the structural balance, which stood at 0.8 % of GDP,***	**1. Address risks related to household debt,** in particular by **gradually limiting the tax deductibility of mortgage interest payments or by increasing recurrent property taxes,** while constraining lending at excessive debt-to-income levels. **Foster investment in housing and improve the efficiency of the housing market,** including by introducing more flexibility in setting rental prices and revising the design of the capital gains tax.

		significantly outperforming the MTO. *However, expenditure increases linked primarily to the reception and integration of migrants are expected to temporary affect the structural balance negatively in 2017. The consolidated gross debt stood at 41.6 % of GDP at the end of 2016, below the Treaty threshold of 60 % of GDP. The debt ratio is projected to decrease further in 2017, as a proportion to GDP.* ***Overall, Sweden's structural balance is expected to remain above the MTO in both 2017 and 2018 and is therefore foreseen to continue to meet the requirements under the preventive arm of the Pact.****"* (pp. 15-16)	

UK	[Country Specific Recommendations 2016](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**	[Assessment of implementation of CSR 2016](#) **(COM Country Report, February 2017)**	[Country Specific Recommendations 2017](#) **SGP: CSR 1** **MIP: -**
	1. Endeavour to correct the excessive deficit in a durable manner by 2016-17. Following the correction of the excessive deficit, achieve a fiscal adjustment of 0,6 % of GDP in 2017-18 towards the minimum medium-term budgetary objective.	In **May 2017**, the Commission evaluated compliance with the SGP in its Assessment of the 2016-17 Convergence Programme for the United Kingdom (without explicitly referring to the assessment grid used for other CSRs): "***The United Kingdom is expected to have corrected its excessive deficit by the 2016-17 deadline set by the Council.*** *Based on the convergence report [and] the Commission 2017 spring forecast,* ***the United Kingdom appears at a risk of some deviation from the recommended adjustment path towards the minimum MTO in 2017-18, and over the two years 2017-18 and 2018-19 taken together.*** *Based on both the convergence report and the Commission 2017 spring forecast, the structural adjustment in 2017-18 is lower than the MLSA, indicating that the UK will not progress towards compliance with the debt criterion. However, the structural adjustment in 2018-19 is above the required MLSA in both the convergence programme and the Commission 2017 spring forecast."* (pp.21-22)	**1. Pursue a substantial fiscal effort in 2018-19 in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact,** taking into account the need to strengthen the ongoing recovery and to ensure the sustainability of the United Kingdom's public finances.
	2. Address shortfalls in network infrastructure investment, including by delivering the priorities of the National Infrastructure Plan. Take further steps to **boost housing supply**, including by implementing the reforms of the national planning policy framework.	**Some progress:** **Some progress** in addressing shortfalls in infrastructure investment. In the November 2016 Autumn Statement the UK announced a further prioritisation of public capital spending towards transport and other infrastructure. A number of major transport and energy investment decisions have been made in 2016. However it is not clear that the conditions are fully in place to secure the large amount of private funding that the UK is relying on to	**2.** Take further steps to **boost housing supply,** including through reforms to planning rules and their implementation.

		remedy investment backlogs in a timely and cost-effective way. **<u>Some progress</u>** on boosting housing supply. The government continues to treat housing as a top policy priority. An ongoing set of reforms should have positive impacts on housing supply, though these will take time and may not be sufficient to address the chronic undersupply of housing.	
	3. Address skills mismatches and provide for skills progression, including by strengthening the quality of apprenticeships. Further **improve the availability of affordable, high-quality, full-time childcare.**	**Some progress:** **<u>Some progress</u>** in addressing skills and apprenticeship issues. The government has continued with implementation of apprenticeship expansion and reform, including the April 2017 advent of both the Apprenticeship levy and the Institute for Apprenticeships. Wider reform which will contribute to addressing skills mismatches and progression issues is demonstrated in the new Post-16 Skills Plan, which is ambitious in intention and will require coherent, committed and timely implementation. **<u>Some progress</u>** in improving childcare availability albeit more mixed progress in the three different elements of affordability, quality and full-time availability. A pilot of the expansion of the doubling of the free childcare offer to three and four year olds has commenced, with full roll-out foreseen for September 2017. However, supply-side concerns, in particular the concerns of providers, appear to require further progress.	**3. Address skills mismatches and provide for skills progression,** including by continuing to strengthen the quality of apprenticeships and providing for other funded 'further education' progression routes.

Euro Area	2016 recommendations on the economic policy of the euro area	Assessment of implementation of 2016 recommendations (COM Report, February 2017)	2017 recommendations on the economic policy of the euro area
	1. Pursue policies that support the recovery, foster convergence, facilitate the correction of macroeconomic imbalances and improve adjustment capacity. To this end, Member States, particularly those with large stocks of private and foreign debt, are to implement reforms that enhance productivity, foster job creation, raise competitiveness and improve the business environment. Member States with large current account surpluses are to implement as a priority measures, including structural reforms, that help strengthen their domestic demand and growth potential.	**Limited progress:** • The correction of existing macroeconomic imbalances is taking place, but the **process is uneven and slow**. • **Significant progress** has been achieved among net debtor countries in correcting their external imbalances, although stocks of net foreign liabilities remain high. • In contrast, countries with large surpluses and positive stocks of net liabilities **have not corrected their surpluses**. • There has been **some progress** in structural reform implementation.	**1. Pursue policies that support sustainable and inclusive growth in the short and the long term, and improve adjustment capacity, rebalancing and convergence.** Prioritise reforms that increase productivity, improve the institutional and business environment, remove bottlenecks to investment, and support job creation. Member States with current account deficits or high external debt should raise productivity while containing unit labour costs. Member States with large current account surpluses should implement, as a priority, measures, including structural reforms and fostering investment, that help to strengthen their domestic demand and growth potential.
	2. Implement reforms that combine: (i) flexible and reliable labour contracts that promote smooth labour market transitions and avoid a two-tier labour market; **(ii) comprehensive lifelong learning strategies; (iii) effective policies to help the unemployed re-enter the labour market; (iv) adequate and sustainable social protection systems** that contribute effectively and efficiently throughout the life cycle both to social inclusion and labour market integration; and **(v) open and competitive product and services markets. Reduce the tax wedge on labour**, particularly on low-earners, in a budgetary-neutral way to foster job creation.	**Some progress:** • **Progress has been made** in implementing flexible and reliable labour contracts that promote labour market transitions and avoid a two-tier labour market, particularly in the euro area Member States with both large cumulated imbalances and stringent job protection legislation before the crisis. • **Some progress** has been made in implementing comprehensive lifelong learning strategies. • **Some progress** has been made in implementing effective policies to help unemployed re-enter the labour market • **Some progress** has been made in implementing modern social protection systems that support those in need and provide incentives for labour market integration. • **Limited progress** has been made in reducing the tax wedge on labour.	**3. Implement reforms that promote competitiveness, job creation, job quality, resilience and economic and social convergence, underpinned by an effective social dialogue.** They should combine: (i) **reliable labour contracts** which provide flexibility and security for employees and employers; (ii) **quality and efficient education and training systems and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies** targeted at labour market needs; (iii) **effective active labour market policies** to support labour market participation; (iv) **modern, sustainable and adequate social protection systems** that contribute effectively and efficiently throughout the life cycle to social inclusion and labour market integration. **Shift taxes away from labour**, particularly for low-income earners and in Member States where cost competitiveness lags behind the euro area average, and make that tax shift budget-neutral in countries without the fiscal room for manoeuvre.

	3. Pursue fiscal policies in full respect of the SGP. For 2016, the objective of a broadly neutral aggregate fiscal stance in the euro area appears appropriate in order to reflect a balance between long-term fiscal sustainability and short-term macroeconomic stabilisation. Looking towards 2017, reduce public debt to restore fiscal buffers and avoid pro-cyclicality. Differentiate the fiscal effort by individual Member States in line with their respective positions with regard to the requirements under the SGP while considering stabilisation needs, as well as taking into account possible spillovers across euro area Member States. To this end, review the euro area fiscal stance in the context of the stability programmes and the draft budgetary plans.	**Some progress:** • Most Member States **broadly complied** with the Stability and Growth Pact in 2016. Some benefitted from the flexibility arrangement to promote structural reforms and investment. Two Member States required new deadlines to correct their excessive deficits. • For 2016, **a slightly expansionary fiscal stance** is expected, which is deemed appropriate for stabilisation purposes in a still tepid recovery, despite fiscal sustainability needs. • For 2017, public debt is expected to **fall moderately**. • **Some progress** has been made in the coordination of fiscal policies, in particular in terms of delivery of an appropriate aggregate fiscal stance. However, the distribution of the aggregate fiscal stance remains sub-optimal across Member States. • The euro area fiscal stance was discussed among Member States in the EWG and the Eurogroup in summer 2016 based on the Stability Programmes.	**2. Aim for an appropriate balance in fiscal policies between the need to ensure sustainability and the need to support investment to strengthen the recovery,** thereby contributing to an appropriate aggregate fiscal stance and a more balanced policy mix. Member States that, according to the Commission assessment, are at risk of not meeting their obligations under the SGP in 2017 should, on that basis, take, in a timely manner, additional measures to ensure compliance. Conversely, Member States that have outperformed their medium-term objectives are invited to continue to prioritise investments to boost potential growth while preserving the long-term sustainability of public finances. Member States that are projected to be broadly compliant with the SGP in 2017 should ensure compliance with the SGP within their national budgetary processes. Pursue fiscal policies in full respect of the SGP, while making the best use of the flexibility embedded within the existing rules. Overall, Member States should improve the composition of public finances by creating more room for tangible and intangible investment, and ensure the effective functioning of national fiscal frameworks.
	4. Facilitate the gradual reduction of banks' non-performing loans and improve insolvency proceedings for businesses and households. In Member States with large stocks of private debt, promote an orderly deleveraging, including by facilitating the resolution of unviable private debt.	**Some progress:** • The supervisory, the macro-prudential, and resolution frameworks have **become fully operational**. The Single Resolution Fund have all the resolution powers in place. • Following the evaluation of the implementation by Member States of the Insolvency Recommendation of 2014, the Commission has engaged in **preparing a legislative initiative** on pre-insolvency and recovery proceedings. The initiative aims at providing tools that would allow viable businesses in distress to be rescued and honest but bankrupt individuals to be given a second chance.	**4.** In line with the roadmap of June 2016, **continue work to complete the Banking Union with regard to risk reduction and risk sharing,** including a European Deposit Insurance Scheme and making the common backstop for the Single Resolution Fund operational at the latest by the end of the Fund's transitional period. Devise and implement an effective euro-area wide strategy to complement prudential supervisory action to address viability risks within the banking sector, including as regards the high level of non-performing loans, inefficient business models and overcapacity. In Member States with large stocks of private debt, promote orderly deleveraging.

	5. Work towards completing EMU in an open and transparent manner, while fully supporting the internal market, and further exploring the legal, economic and political aspects of the more long-term measures contained in the Five Presidents' Report.	**Some progress:** • The Council **adopted** the recommendation to set up National Productivity Boards on 20 September 2016. • The Members of the European Fiscal Board (EFB) **have been appointed** and the EFB **became operational** in October 2016. • Regarding external representation, in June 2016, the Council **agreed** on some minimal improvements in coordination of IMF issues and agreed to continue discussions on further strengthening the coordination. • An Ad-hoc Working Group (AHWG) in the Council **was set up**, which worked on a roadmap to complete the Banking Union. The roadmap was adopted by the Council in June 2016.	**5. Make progress on completing EMU, in full respect of the Union's internal market and in an open and transparent manner towards non-euro area Member States.** Further advance the ongoing initiatives and work on the longer-term issues for EMU, taking due account of the Commission White Paper on the Future of Europe.

Assessment criteria used by the Commission in its evaluation of Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) implementation

European Semester 2016 Cycle

(1) **No progress:** The Member States (MS) has not credibly announced nor adopted any measures to address the CSR. Below a number of non-exhaustive typical situations that could be covered under this, to be interpreted on a case by case basis taking into account country-specific conditions:

- no legal, administrative, or budgetary measures have been announced in the National Reform Programme or in other official communication to the national Parliament / relevant parliamentary committees, the European Commission, or announced in public (e.g. in a press statement, information on government's website);
- no non-legislative acts have been presented by the governing or legislator body;
- the Member State has taken initial steps in addressing the CSR, such as commissioning a study or setting up a study group to analyse possible measures that would need to be taken (unless the CSR explicitly asks for orientations or exploratory actions), while clearly-specified measure(s) to address the CSR has not been proposed.

(2) **Limited progress:** The MS has:

- announced certain measures but these only address the CSR to a limited extent; and/or
- presented legislative acts in the governing or legislator body but these have not been adopted yet and substantial non-legislative further work is needed before the CSR will be implemented;
- presented non-legislative acts, yet with no further follow-up in terms of implementation which is needed to address the CSR.

(3) **Some progress:** The MS has adopted measures that partly address the CSR and/or the Member State has adopted measures that address the CSR, but a fair amount of work is still needed to fully address the CSR as only a few of the adopted measures have been implemented. For instance: adopted by national parliament; by ministerial decision; but no implementing decisions are in place.

(4) **Substantial progress:** The MS has adopted measures that go a long way in addressing the CSR and most of which have been implemented.

(5) **Full implementation:** The MS has implemented all measures needed to address the CSR appropriately.